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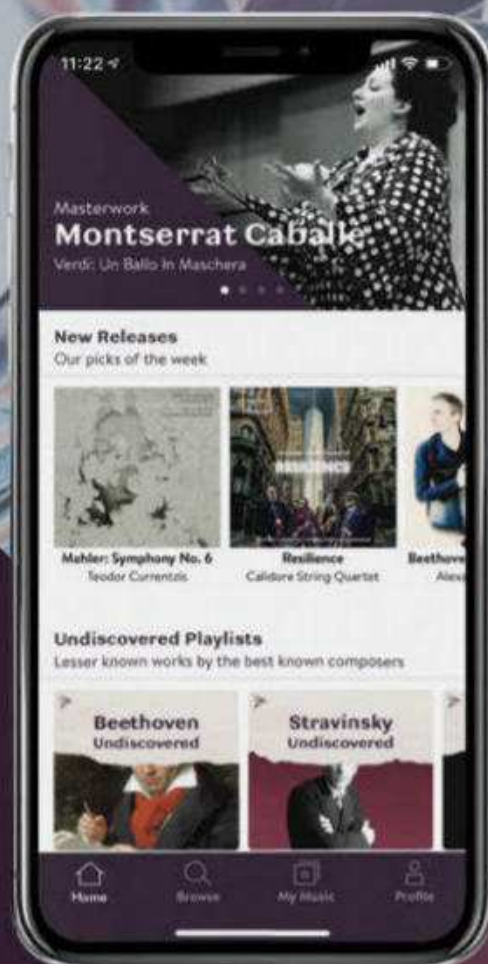
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GRAMOPHONE

ISOUNDS OF AMERICA

A special eight-page section focusing on recent recordings from the US and Canada

D Anderson

'One at a Time'

Abe's Rag^a. Five Bagatelles and a Synopsis^a.

'... increasingly, physical ...'^b. '... mood, enough ...'^c.

Piece for Clarinet and Tape^d. '... procession,

emerging ...'^e. '... springing, gradually ...'^f.

'... vikings, unless ...'^g. Wedding Music^h

^bMaureen Keenan ^{fl}^dGary Dranch ^{cl}^gRichard

Cohen ^{bcl}^eJill Collura ^{bn}^hJohn Charles Thomas

^{tpt/flugelhn}^fDebbie Schmidt ^{hn}ⁱIna Litera ^{va}

^aJin-Ok Lee ^{pf}

Ravello © RR7992 (65' • DDD)



Never mind that five of the nine works on this recording of solo instrumental music

have lower-case titles. There is enough substance in each of Douglas Anderson's scores to warrant attention apart from their elusive monikers.

Writing solo pieces can be a challenge with instruments that have a limited ability to explore, or suggest, harmonic regions. Yet Anderson is canny when faced with such apparent obstacles. He employs various techniques specific to each instrument in shaping compelling and mysterious narratives, such as the muted passages and tonguing effects for French horn in '... *springing, gradually* ...', the bass clarinet's brooding orations in '... *vikings, unless* ...' and the flute's sweeping and animated flights in '... *increasingly, physical* ...' (those commas are as enigmatic as the ellipses).

Some of the music is catapulted by serial techniques, though Anderson doesn't dawdle on the tone rows. The viola in '... *mood, enough* ...' announces the thematic material and then diverges to shape four short movements of expressive, vital commentary, complete with nods to old masters. Similarly, or not, '... *procession, emerging*...' is more illuminating as a reflection of the bassoon's personality than it is of any serial ideas.

A bit of piquant dialogue can be heard in *Piece for Clarinet and Tape*, and the soloist in *Wedding Music* has the chance to do his heraldic thing on both trumpet and flugelhorn. The only instrument easily capable of weaving lines is the piano,

GRAMOPHONE *talks to ...*

Stephen Yip

The Hong Kong-born composer on fusing East with West and the importance of musical texture

What have been your major influences?

I'd say most kinds of oriental culture in both contemporary and traditional forms. First, I believe music is related more widely to culture, and to society and its heritage. As an Asian-born composer who has spent over 20 years living in the United States, I think my roots are more from the Asian side. I think musical language is related to verbal language, and my music is influenced by many different oriental art forms.

Is your compositional style influenced by your use of Chinese instruments such as the guzheng?

Not exactly, but I focus on the nature of the sound production with any musical instrument I'm writing for. I look for the nature of the sound in each instrument, and try to explore their possibilities of timbre and projection. Whether I'm writing for Eastern or Western instruments, the specific primitive nature of their sound is what is important.



Your music suggests a very refined ear for texture. Is this important to your work?

Absolutely. In fact, for me layers of sound form different spectrums, and each layer must have its own tone colour. These overlap with each other to create unexpected senses of colour and space, and one hopes these textures help to form a beautiful, three-dimensional sonic picture.

What's next?

I have been working on some ongoing projects of duos - for flute and harp, flute and bass flute, violin and viola, alto flute and pipa, and viola and cello. I don't know why these duo projects have all come at once, but these will keep me busy during 2019.

which is highlighted in two divergent and engaging scores, *Five Bagatelles and a Synopsis* and *Abe's Rag*. All the soloists are expert champions of Anderson's inventive brainstorm. **Donald Rosenberg**

Garland

The Landscape Scrolls

John Lane ^{perc}

Starkland © ST229 (50' • DDD)

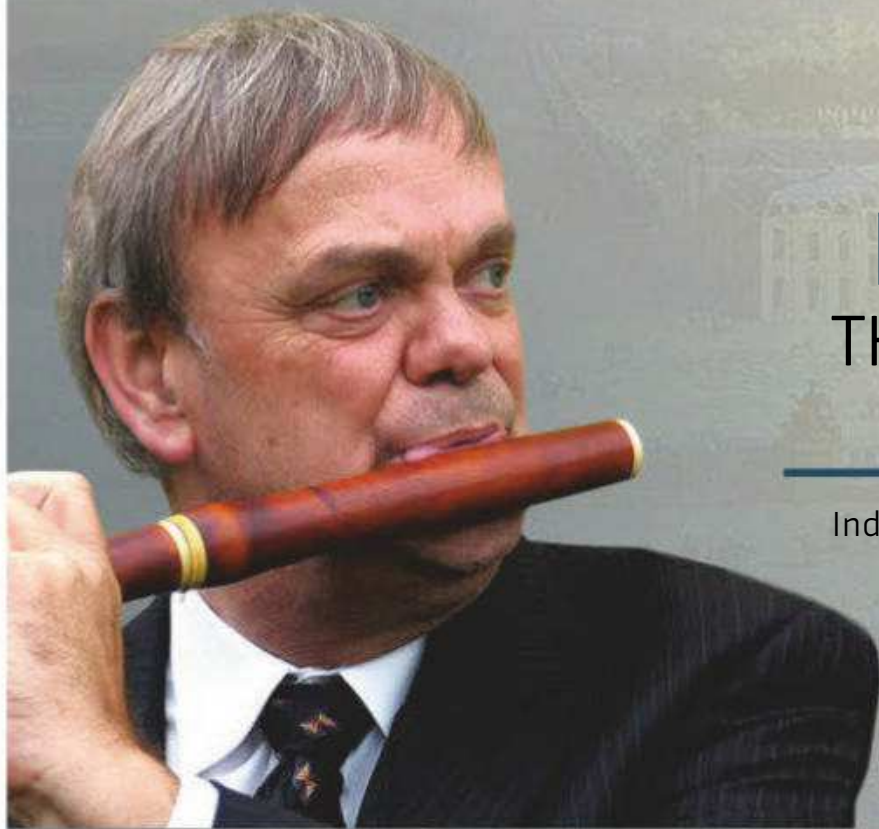


It was the early 1980s when I dropped in at Lou Harrison's place on the California

coast. I had met him through his work with Ken Goldsmith and Terry King, for whom he had written his Double Concerto with Javanese gamelan.

In fact, a gamelan rehearsal was under way when I arrived, so Lou enlisted me to repeat a seven-note rhythmic sequence on a small gong. Ad infinitum. The first five minutes were entirely enjoyable and the second five became increasingly physically painful, before the third gave way to a pleasing numbness.

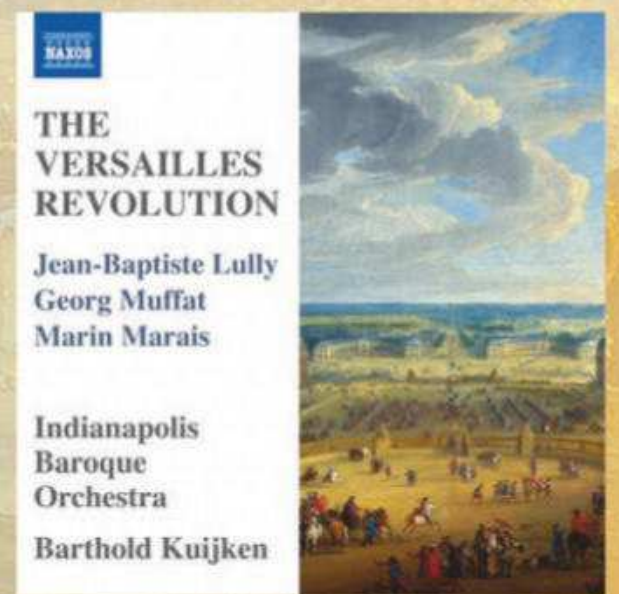
Starkland's premiere recording of Peter Garland's wonderful *The Landscape Scrolls* is like that afternoon. There is nothing particularly new about the concept of music that in the listening becomes a joint



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Deliciously virtuoso: Sauro Berti and Mario Ciaccio bring a tangible sense of fun to the music of Arthur Gottschalk

meditative enterprise but Garland makes sure that each movement takes its cues for emotion and movement according to the sound universe it will inhabit and his own personal sense of time. Responding to John Lane's request in his commission for a 'concert-length piece', drawing inspiration from the 15th-century painter Sesshū Tōyō, Garland uses one set of monochromatic drums for each of five movements, segmenting the diurnal cycle from midday to early morning.

Overall, the sequence has a rise to sheer joy and fall that justifies its 50-minute length. Individually, the five sound palettes – eight drums (Chinese or Native American), nine rice bowls, three triangles (for the fireflies of early summer), glockenspiel (for Van Gogh's *Starry Night*) and tubular bells – become the meditation which becomes the music.

Garland's notes and an introduction by John Luther Adams add to the enjoyment of the audiophile recording. **Laurence Vittes**

A Gottschalk

'Art for Two'

Alto Saxophone Sonata^a. Bass Clarinet Sonata^b. Benny, Zoot and Teddy (play Richard and Lorenz)^c. Oh, More or Less^d. Shalom^e

Sauro Berti ^ccl/^bde/bcl **Mario Ciaccio** ^asax/^cde/sax

^{abc}**Naomi Fujiya** ^{pf}^e**Eccher Shool of Music Vocal**

Ensemble

Navona © NV6185 (52' • DDD)



The Californian Arthur Gottschalk (b1952) – no relation, I think, to Louis

Moreau Gottschalk – studied with Ross Lee Finney and William Bolcom, among others, and currently teaches composition at Rice University's Shepherd School of Music. He has an impressive catalogue of orchestral, chamber, film and TV music to his credit. The five pieces collected here are written in a modern tonal idiom, eclectic in style ranging from jazz, classical and – as the minimal music notes accompanying the disc online aver – 'traditional Jewish hymns to Frank Zappa'.

There is a tangible sense of fun running through much of the music, whether the bracing trio for clarinet, tenor sax and piano *Benny, Zoot and Teddy* (play Richard and Lorenz) of 2012 – named from, presumably, Benny Goodman, Zoot Sims and (I'm guessing here) Teddy Wilson – or the darker Bass Clarinet Sonata (2009), with its quirky movement titles: 'Overture Salt Peanuts Memorial Barbeque', 'Motet – Ancient Incantations' and 'Green Dolphy Street Boogie'. By contrast, the Alto Saxophone Sonata (2007) has a decidedly French aspect to it which reminded me a

little of Jean Françaix, not least in the central Waltz Nocturne.

The performances are deliciously virtuoso and full of life, not least the duets for tenor sax and bass clarinet *Oh, More or Less* (2011) and *Shalom* (2015 – with the addition of a choir to slightly Ivesian effect). Mario Ciaccio and Sauro Berti prove excitingly nimble-fingered and -tongued exponents, beautifully supported by Naomi Fujiya. Navona's sound is close but very clear. **Guy Rickards**

Yip

Ding^a. In Seventh Heaven^b. Peace of Mind^c.

Ran^d. Tranquility in Consonance^e.

Whispering Fragrance^f

^eIzumi Miyahara ^{fl}^eMasahito Sugihara, ^bDaniel

Gelok ^{sax}^e**Ben Roidl-Ward** ^{bn}^f**Yu-Fang Chen** ^{vn}

^b**Rudy Michael Albach**, ^a**Henry Chen** ^{db}^{be}**Andrew**

Schneider ^{pf}^a**Yu-Chen Wang**, ^d**Jiuan-Reng Yeh**

^{guzheng}^c**Thelema Trio**

Navona © NV6175 (67' • DDD)



Born in Hong Kong and now living in the United States, Stephen Yip is a composer

whose chamber works abound in colourful textures that take their cue from traditional Asian music as well as extended techniques

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appropriated by many contemporary Western composers.

The first two minutes of *Peace of Mind* (2014), for example, present a clarinetist and a saxophonist emitting growls and gurgles, interspersed with isolated piano notes struck by hammers with fingers stopping the strings. After that, melodies and chords begin to establish themselves. Sometimes they build to climaxes, other times they murmur quietly and aphoristically. Yip adds a flute to that combination of instruments for the aptly titled *Tranquility in Consonance* (2016). While the basic textures and narrative trajectory are similar to those in the other piece, I find it to be more concise, harmonically engaging and dramatic, especially in passages where lyrical flute trills are buttressed by slippery clarinet rejoinders and low-lying saxophone multiphonics.

Throughout *In Seventh Heaven* (2014), I'm struck by the interplay between rapid double-bass bow-strokes, scratching upon the piano's low strings and sustained saxophone low notes, along with sequences of billowy piano chords surrounded by harmonics from the double bass and sundry saxophone sound effects. The climax towards the end evokes the ecstatic complexity of the best free jazz and is followed by several minutes of static winding-down before the piece concludes.

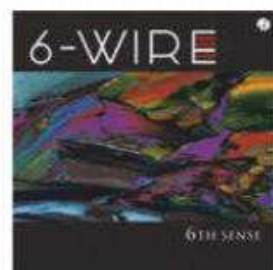
Similarly, the CD's title track, *Whispering Fragrance* (2017), is a solo violin piece that provides a rhapsodic though mostly low-key showcase for Yu-Fang Chen's remarkable control of difficult harmonics and rapid-fire staccatos. However, Yip's creativity truly takes wing in *Ran* (2014), where he takes full advantage of Jiuang-Reng Yeh's extraordinary virtuosity on the traditional guzheng and creates a beguiling tapestry of strummed and bowed sounds, abetted by the performer's singing voice. Although the opening selection, *Ding* (2015) for guzheng and double bass, arguably sprawls and takes a while to find its core, the final four minutes feature some inventive rhythmic repartee and use of registers.

In short, Stephen Yip's splendid ear and sophisticated technique stand him in good stead, along with his avoidance of stock-in-trade 'atmospheric' clichés (for the most part). One assumes that the composer was involved in the preparation of this disc's uniformly first-rate and responsive performances, all gorgeously served by the superb engineering. **Jed Distler**

'6th Sense'

JS Bach Concerto for Two Violins, BWV1043 – Allegro (arr 6-wire) **Dvořák** Humoresque (arr Gao) **Gao** 6th Sense. Beijinger **Gershwin** It ain't necessarily so **Monti** Czardas **Piazzolla** Libertango **Sarasate** Carmen Fantasy, Op 25 (arr 6-wire) **Traditional** Enchanted Evening. Sunshine over the Tashikuergan Desert. Two Moons

6-wire (a crossover piano trio) with **Bo Li** vc
Meyer Media © MM18038 (65' • DDD)



In the midst of premiering new works by Mark Hagerty, Bright Sheng and Jennifer Barker and getting ready to make their debut at Carnegie Hall's Zankel Hall next February, the self-described crossover piano trio 6-wire have issued a recording engineered by Grammy-winner Andreas Meyer that showcases their unique sound and repertoire.

In fact, 6-wire is not a piano trio in the traditional sense. The University of Delaware's ensemble-in-residence is made up of a conventional Western, four-string violin, a two-string Chinese erhu – the six wires from which the group takes its name – and piano. The sound of the three instruments together, and in various configurations with Chinese zither, cello and sound effects, seems to inevitably become a fascinating game of contrasts between the sweet, soaring timbres of Xiang Gao's violin and Cathy Yang's huskier and sexier erhu.

The Chinese 'folk' tracks are sweet enough and give the piano more substantial roles; Matthew Brower's opening solo in *Sunrise over the Tashikuergan Desert* is more than a minute long. But it is the two pieces by Gao – the nine-minute title-track in memory of the victims of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, ending in the sadness of sirens and a children's song, and *Beijinger*, dedicated to Malaysian flight 370 – that have the most personal involvement.

Of the seven Western lollipop arrangements, the Bach concerto is the most convincing; while it might not eclipse memories of the iconic Django Reinhardt version from 1937, the erhu joins in so brilliantly that after a while it becomes hard to sort the two string instruments out. **Laurence Vittes**

'Russian Trumpet Sonatas'

Aleksandrov Trumpet Sonata **Baryshev** Sonatina in the Russian Style **Chichkov** Trumpet Sonatina **Isakova** Trumpet Sonata **Lyubovsky** Trumpet Sonata **Milman** Trumpet Sonata **Okunev** Trumpet Sonatina **Platonov** Trumpet Sonata **Iskander Akhmadullin** tpt **Natalia Bolshakova** pf
MSR Classics © MS1697 (74' • DDD)

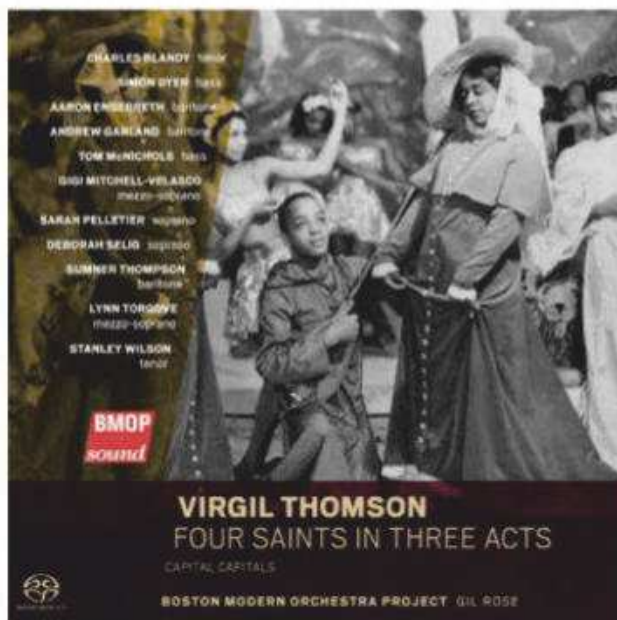


Although entitled 'Russian Trumpet Sonatas', this album featuring eight Soviet-era sonatas is really the story of two intrepid trumpeters. One, Georgy Antonovich Orvid (1904–80), commissioned four of the sonatas and almost single-handedly generated the trumpet sonata form as a concert item in mid-20th-century Russia; the other is Iskander Akhmadullin (b1970) who, with his pianist wife Natalia Bolshakova accompanying, performs this intriguing survey of unfamiliar Soviet music.

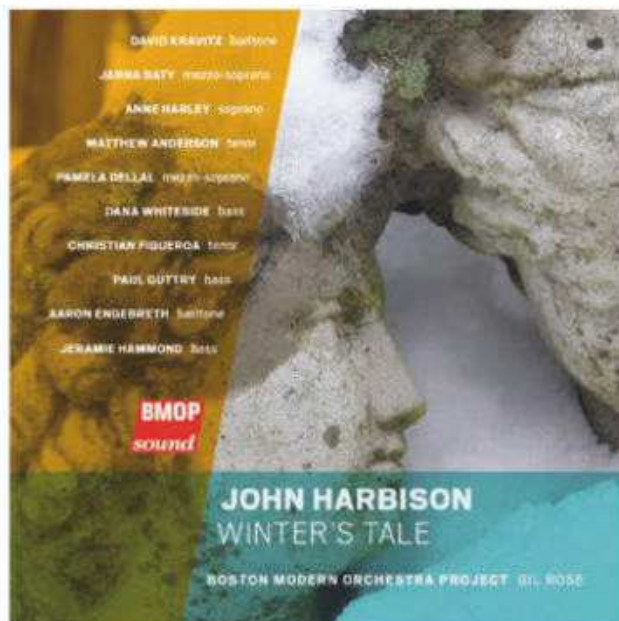
It is to be regretted that Orvid did not persuade some of the premier-league Soviet composers like Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Myaskovsky or Khachaturian to compose solo sonatas for his instrument. Varied as the present clutch is, the programme lacks any truly standout works, despite the many intricacies of the writing. Akhmadullin is very informative on the demands on the players, for example in Yuri Chichkov's all-too-brief single-movement Sonatina in G flat (1950), given here in Akhmadullin's transposition to G major, which gallantly transfers the trickier challenges from the keyboard to the trumpet.

The works are presented in more or less chronological sequence and it is the later ones – by Leonid Lyubovsky (1969), Gherman Okunev (1970, again all too brief), Alexander Baryshev (1970) and Aida Isakova (1986) – that prove the most interesting musically. At 16'25" in length, Isakova's is by some distance the longest and weightiest – indeed, the only weighty – item on the disc, its *Andante-Allegro-Andante* opening movement alone larger than all the other works bar those of Nikolai Platonov (c1962; a virtuoso test piece but musically forgettable), Yuri Aleksandrov (c1964) and Mark Milman's noisy but empty single span (1962). Isakova's and Okunev's are the only works that allow both players to display their musicality as strongly as their considerable agility. Good, rather clinical, close-miked sound. **Guy Rickards**

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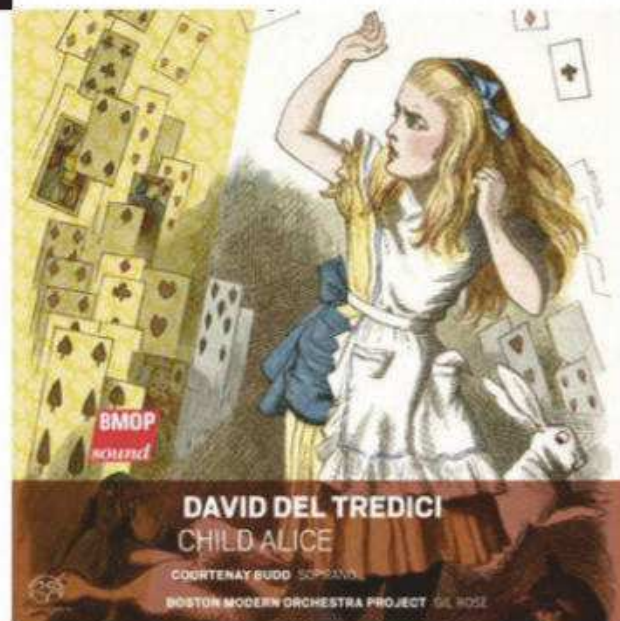
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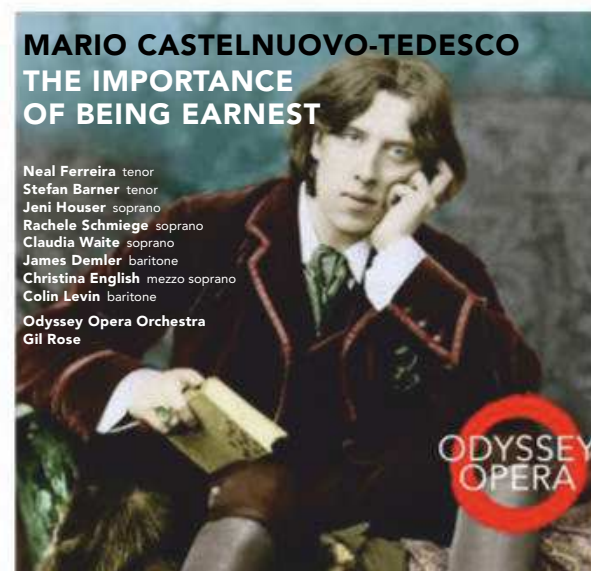
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'Scenes from Home'

CA Brown Early Winter Spires **Halladay** Five Scenes from our Aspen Grove **Mullikin** Suite antique **Rutherford** Three Poems **G Simon** Two Orchids

Kellan Toohey cl **Suyeon Kim** pf
MSR Classics © MS1656 (55' • DDD)



Kellan Toohey, a gifted young clarinetist from Colorado, has bestowed a lovely

gift upon composers 'who are either from Colorado, or who have lived here for some

Iskander Akhmadullin plays Russian trumpet sonatas with his wife Natalia Bolshakova – see review on page V

part of their life'. The well-deserved fruit of Toohey's Kickstarter campaign is music inspired by the beauties of the state's natural landscape; it is unfailingly mellow, engages the listener with genuine affection and a distinctive voice, and he knows how to make a clarinet sound very fine.

Emily Rutherford's *Three Poems* are full of meandering, gentle, wistful Satie-esque surprises; the last takes particular delight in delicious curlicues. Conor Abbott Brown's *Early Winter Spires* starts hypnotically in a klezmer vein, then scales towering graphite pinnacles with musical equipment, the composer notes, that includes Debussy and the Icelandic rock group Sigur Rós. It is the second movement from the concerto that Brown wrote in 2010 for David Krakauer and a wonderful 4'31" tour de force.

David Mullikin, who wrote an oboe concerto that Colorado Symphony principal Peter Cooper recorded with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, contributes a playful, charming *Suite antique* that is most effective when it's being blithely neo-Mozartian. Nature returns magnificently with Andrew Halladay's *Five Scenes from our Aspen Grove*, exploring America's innocent musical soul: open, curious and

apt to break into song at any moment. Greg Simon's sad, lovely *Two Orchids* captures memories of Denver like raindrops on a lake.

Toohey infuses his beauty of tone and gradations of nuance with thrilling flights

of virtuosity, with Suyeon Kim always effectively and often quite gorgeously at his side. **Laurence Vittes**

'Unexplored'

Cassadó Cello Sonata **Rimsky-Korsakov** The Flight of the Bumblebee (transcr Bryant) **Rudnytsky** Romantic Fantasy, Op 43 **Tchaikovsky** Six French Songs, Op 65 (transcr Radulovich) **Nada Radulovich** vc **Cullan Bryant** pf
Navona © NV6171 (50' • DDD)



All four works here are premiere recordings – two only in transcription – and

the major item is without doubt the Sonata by the great cellist Gaspar Cassadó (1897–1966), who seems never to have recorded it. Cast in four movements, this is not the same piece as Cassadó's more familiar *Sonata in Ancient Spanish Style* but a full-blooded portrait of his native Spain opening with an evocative 'Rapsodia', followed by a lively 'Aragonesa', a gentle 'Saeta' and rousing 'Paso-doble' to conclude.

Cellist Nada Radulovich is the transcriber for Tchaikovsky's enchanting *Six French Songs* (1888), originally written for the Belgian soprano Désirée Artôt-Padilla. Radulovich's arrangements catch their lyricism and charm and her performance tends to the fleeter end of the spectrum (accounts of the vocal set run anywhere between 15 and 20 minutes). The largest single span, at 10'38", is provided by the well-crafted but otherwise unremarkable *Romantic Fantasy* (1966) of the Ukrainian Antin Rudnytsky (1902–75), whose dates confirm him as a contemporary of Shostakovich, something in no way apparent from the ultra-conservative idiom.

Radulovich and Bryant's playing is sensitive and well shaped throughout, as one would expect from a duo with 'years of collaboration' together. Where the disc is let down is in Radulovich's intonation and the hard, unsympathetic sound. The cello tone sounds edgy, thin and sometimes out of tune with Bryant's piano, marring the rendering of the Tchaikovsky and Bryant's arrangement for cello and piano of the ubiquitous *Flight of the Bumblebee*, a reworking created specifically for her. This is not so much of a distraction in the Sonata and Fantasy, perhaps because of the music's unfamiliarity. A shame.

Guy Rickards



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The open-mindedness of the finest artists

If anyone doubts the astonishing range and quality of classical music recordings being made today – and, I hope, regular readers of these pages would harbour no such perception – then they should really take heed of this month's releases. There's always a slight seasonality to release schedules, summers are traditionally more quiet, and labels often gear up for the pre-Christmas period with headline projects. But even so, take a look through our pages – this month really stands out. Choosing the Editor's Choices is always a difficult task, but this month it was doubly so given just how many recordings had drawn such heart-felt plaudits from our critics.

That two major labels should produce extraordinary piano records from leading young artists as different in approach as Igor Levit's deeply thought-out meditation on life, featuring music from Bach to Busoni, and Víkingur Ólafsson's beautifully coloured exploration of, again, Bach, is a powerful reflection of the industry's continuing commitment to not just nurturing the next generation, but to giving them the platforms their music-making deserves. Both artists share an aversion to allowing either themselves or their repertoire to be pigeonholed. At a Deutsche Grammophon event this month Ólafsson reflected on this, citing his upbringing in Iceland as a part of shaping this mindset. In a small country, he said, you simply can't isolate yourself by style, and many musicians happily genre-hop, even from day to day (including, apparently, players stepping between orchestra and heavy metal bands), enriching themselves, their audiences and their art form as they do so. It's a mindset we see more and more among



the younger generation of musicians as streaming continues to break down barriers. Levit's album, meanwhile, movingly closes with a work by the jazz pianist and composer Bill Evans.

Speaking of championing young artists, 21 years ago Sony Classical backed a 17-year-old violinist and brought the world her remarkable performances of three of Bach's six sonatas and partitas. Now, courtesy this time of Decca, Hilary Hahn completes the set for us. The result is Bach-playing of breathtaking accomplishment. (And, again, Bach: what is it about this composer that inspires artists to such heights and, indeed, depths?). A superb Recording of the Month.

But as we continue to celebrate the extraordinary legacy being laid down month by month, by the most inspirational artists of today, let us also pause to remember the passing of one of the greats from the 'Golden era' of opera recording. Montserrat Caballé, who has died aged 85, had a voice of both thrilling beauty and drama (surely that's what lay behind the *New York Times* headline from 1965: 'Callas + Tebaldi = Caballé'), and one that excelled in repertoire from *bel canto* to Wagner. But late in her career she acquired fame far beyond opera goers when she duetted with Freddie Mercury in the hit single 'Barcelona'. Here, indeed, was an artist not afraid to throw herself into another genre, and to do so with considerable style. Perhaps an openness to genre-hopping is not a new phenomenon after all: today's young artists are simply following in the footsteps trod by one of opera's true, and much-missed, icons.

martin.cullingford@markallengroup.com

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS



'Couperin's *Leçons de ténèbres* are the tucked-away masterpieces of Baroque church music,' says

LINDSAY KEMP, who listened to over 30 recordings for this month's Collection. 'But anyone who knows them has to love them for their profound beauty, nobility and expression.'



'I knew the Chiaroscuro Quartet could give me a rich interview on Schubert's *Death and the Maiden*,'

says **CHARLOTTE GARDNER**, who wrote this month's Musician and Score. 'However, I hadn't anticipated the sheer number of entirely fresh and illuminating pictures they ended up painting in my head.'



'All the most interesting cellists are musical explorers,' says **RICHARD BRATBY**, who

interviews Daniel Müller-Schott this issue. 'I was delighted to find he shares my enthusiasm for neglected Russian miniatures and sees them as unlocking a whole new artistic world.'

Gramophone, which has been serving the classical music world since 1923, is first and foremost a monthly review magazine, delivered today in both print and digital formats. It boasts an eminent and knowledgeable panel of experts, which reviews the full range of classical music recordings. Its reviews are completely independent. In addition to reviews, its interviews and features help readers to explore in greater depth the recordings that the magazine covers, as well as offer insight into the work of composers and performers. It is *the* magazine for the classical record collector, as well as for the enthusiast starting a voyage of discovery.

THE REVIEWERS Andrew Achenbach • David Allen • Nalen Anthoni • Tim Ashley • Mike Ashman • Michelle Assay • Richard Bratby • Edward Breen • Liam Cagney • Alexandra Coghlan • Rob Cowan (consultant reviewer) • Jeremy Dibble • Peter Dickinson • Jed Distler • Adrian Edwards • Richard Fairman • David Fallows • David Fanning • Andrew Farach-Colton • Iain Fenlon • Neil Fisher • Fabrice Fitch • Jonathan Freeman-Attwood • Charlotte Gardner • David Gutman • Christian Hoskins • Lindsay Kemp • Philip Kennicott • Richard Lawrence • Andrew Mellor • Ivan Moody • Bryce Morrison • Hannah Nepil • Jeremy Nicholas • Christopher Nickol • Geoffrey Norris • Richard Osborne • Stephen Plaistow • Mark Pullinger • Peter Quantrill • Guy Rickards • Malcolm Riley • Marc Rochester • Patrick Rucker • Julie Anne Sadie • Edward Seckerson • Hugo Shirley • Pwyll ap Siôn • Harriet Smith • David Patrick Stearns • David Threasher • David Vickers • John Warrack • Richard Whitehouse • Arnold Whittall • Richard Wigmore • William Yeoman

CONTENTS

Volume 96 Number 1168

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Reviews

EDITOR'S CHOICE

7

The 12 most highly recommended recordings reviewed in this issue

RECORDING OF THE MONTH

32

Violinist Hilary Hahn plays solo Bach with an expressive urgency, combining a distinctive personality with idiomatic flair in a way that is both compelling and deeply touching

ORCHESTRAL

34

Zefiro turn to Bach's *Brandenburgs*; Adám Fischer's latest Mahler instalment; Vasily Petrenko's Norwegian Scriabin; Yuja on the road

CHAMBER

52

The Arcadia's Bartók; Isabelle Faust plays Mozart; Steve Reich's *Drumming* from Kuniko

INSTRUMENTAL

64

Chopin from Leif Ove Andsnes; Lugansky's impressive Debussy; Jean Rondeau plays Scarlatti

VOCAL

78

Two accounts of Berlioz's *Grande Messe des morts*; Josquin from The Tallis Scholars; Liszt songs

OPERA

94

Britten's *Billy Budd* on DVD from Madrid; Wagner's *Götterdämmerung* from Hong Kong

JAZZ & WORLD MUSIC

103

Reviews from our sister titles *Jazzwise* and *Songlines*

REISSUES

104

George Szell's complete Columbia recordings; a celebration of Alicia de Larrocha

BOX-SET ROUND-UP

109

REPLAY

110

Some pioneering violinists; historic Rubbra

CLASSICS RECONSIDERED

112

Two critics discuss Karajan's 1973 recording of Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht*, and its classic status

BOOKS

114

Alan Walker's abundantly detailed Chopin biography; personal reflections on Shostakovich

GRAMOPHONE COLLECTION

114

Lindsay Kemp surveys the available recordings of Couperin's intimate and moving *Leçons de ténèbres*

REVIEWS INDEX

136



Features

FOR THE RECORD

8

All the latest classical music news, and more

IAN BOSTRIDGE ON SONG

14

The tenor, acclaimed for his thoughtful insights and penetrating interpretations, describes what makes song such a powerful medium, how poetic text and musical voice can enhance one another, and the varied musical responses to war

BERLIOZ FROM BERGEN

20

British conductor Edward Gardner tells Andrew Mellor about the attractions of working in Norway's second city, and his new recording of Berlioz's *Grande Messe de morts*

DANIEL MÜLLER-SCHOTT

26

The adventurous cellist talks to Richard Bratby about exploring his instrument's large repertoire, working with his mentor Mstislav Rostropovich, and his new recording of Russian music

MUSICIAN AND THE SCORE

50

Charlotte Gardner discusses the intricacies of Schubert's *Death and the Maiden* String Quartet with the violinists of the Chiaroscuro Quartet

ICONS

62

Jed Distler reflects on the playing of Julius Katchen, the American pianist who died aged 42

CONTEMPORARY COMPOSERS

76

Paul Kilbey explores the eclectic music of German composer Moritz Eggert

WHAT NEXT?

92

Haydn's *Military* Symphony is the starting point for this month's suggested listening journeys

PERFORMANCES AND EVENTS

122

HIGH FIDELITY

125

NOTES, LETTERS & OBITS

132

NEW RELEASES

134

MY MUSIC

138

The children's author Cornelia Funke reflects on the relationship between music and her writing

Great Voices on Sony Classical

Pretty Yende

Dreams

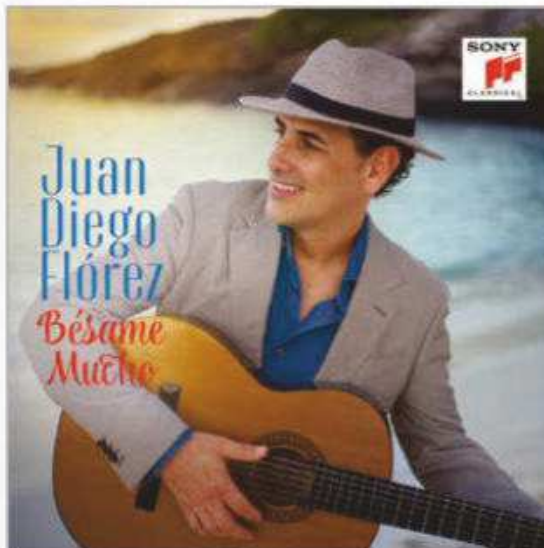


88985430152

Signature works from the bel canto repertoire including sparkling arias by Bellini, Donizetti and Meyerbeer

Juan Diego Flórez

Bésame Mucho



19075822942

The Peruvian star tenor returns to his roots with a homage to Latin music including hits *Bésame Mucho* and *Volver*

Sonya Yoncheva

The Verdi Album



88985417982

A selection of arias from Verdi's most beloved masterpieces and earlier gems including *Il trovatore*, *Don Carlo*, *Otello* and *Stiffelio*

Benjamin Appl

Bach



19075851622

The young baritone retraces the liturgical church year with stunning arias from Bach's varied cantata output

Jonas Kaufmann

An Italian Night - Live from the Waldbühne Berlin

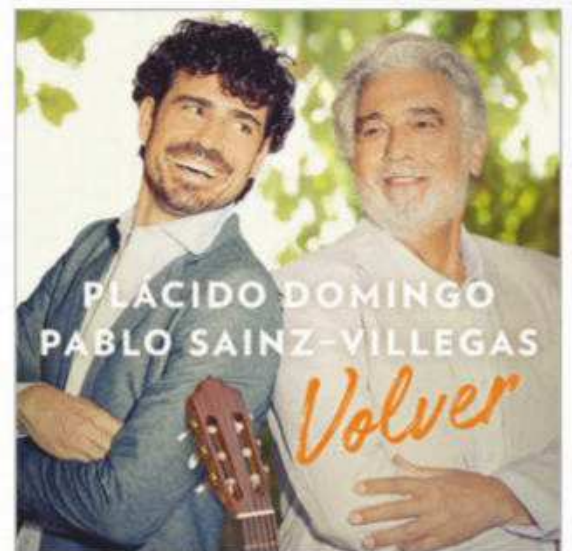


19075879332

The world's greatest tenor presents a collection of the most popular Italian repertoire live from Berlin's outdoor amphitheatre

Plácido Domingo & Pablo Sáinz Villegas

Volver



88985416852

Domingo and Sáinz Villegas join forces to present a selection of famous Iberian and Latin-American songs including *Gracias a la Vida* and *Historia de un Amor*

If you enjoy riding with the Valkyries.



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GRAMOPHONE *Editor's choice*

Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings from this month's reviews

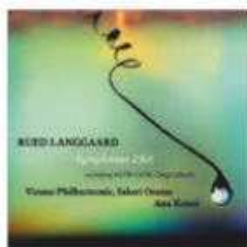


RECORDING OF THE MONTH



BACH
Solo Violin Sonatas – Nos 1 & 2. Solo Violin Partita No 1
Hilary Hahn *vn*
Decca
► **ROB COWAN'S REVIEW IS ON PAGE 32**

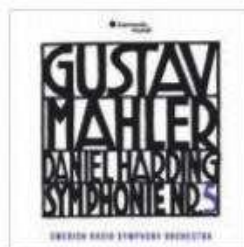
Hilary Hahn returns to solo Bach with the wisdom of experience, but with an astonishing freedom, virtuosity and vision that convinces you that this is the perfect way to play this sublime music.



LANGGAARD
Symphonies Nos 2 & 6
GADE Tango jalousie
Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra / Sakari Oramo
Dacapo

Unfamiliar but deeply rewarding music played by a great orchestra clearly relishing the opportunity to engage with this composer's fascinating sound world.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 40**



MAHLER
Symphony No 5
Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra / Daniel Harding
Harmonia Mundi

Proof that the Swedish RSO is on fine form under Daniel Harding who gives a superb performance of this popular and great symphony.

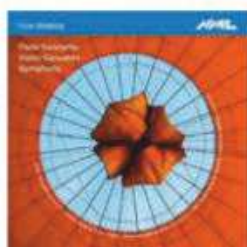
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 41**



TCHAIKOVSKY
Swan Lake
State Academic SO of Russia 'Evgeny Svetlanov' / Vladimir Jurowski
Pentatone

Familiar – and glorious – music given a fresh approach under Jurowski who explained his thoughts on the score in last month's 'Musician and the Score'.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 47**

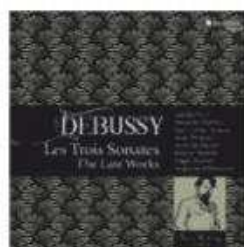


WATKINS
Flute Concerto. Violin Concerto. Symphony
Adam Walker *fl*
Alina Ibragimova *vn*
BBC SO / Gardner; Hallé /

R Wigglesworth NMC

Three major works from one of the most interesting of today's composers, one well able to 'enchant' (in Guy Rickards's word).

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 47**



DEBUSSY Les Trois Sonates – The Late Works
various
Harmonia Mundi

Top-notch French players explore three sonatas from Debussy's final years in a series – from our Label of the Year – that's turning out to be impressive indeed.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 52**



SCHUBERT
String Quartets Nos 9 & 14
'Death and the Maiden'
Chiaroscuro Quartet
BIS

Two Schubert string quartets, early and 'late', played with enormous conviction and power by this very stylish ensemble.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 58**

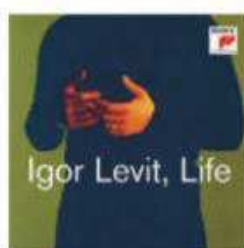


BACH Keyboard Works
Víkingur Ólafsson *pf*
DG

Following his terrific recording last year of the music

of Philip Glass, this engaging pianist turns his attention to JS Bach, with piano-playing of glowing lyricism and sparkling virtuosity.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 64**



'LIFE'
Igor Levit *pf*
Sony Classical

A musical meditation on death and absence by one of today's most thoughtful and intense pianists. A triumph of imaginative programming that ranges from Bach to Frederic Rzewski, and elevated further by masterly pianism.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 71**



DUPARC. RAVEL
'Aimer et mourir – danses et mélodies'
Magdalena Kožená *mez*
DSO Berlin / Robin Ticciati
Linn

A wonderfully heady programme of French music that shows Ticciati's developing relationship with his Berlin orchestra. Lovely singing from Kožená.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 82**



DVD/BLU-RAY
'THROUGH THE EYES OF YUJA'
Yuja Wang *pf*
Camerata Salzburg / Lionel Bringuier
C Major Entertainment

A disarmingly honest, and fascinating, glimpse into the life of one of today's leading virtuosos, complete with performances of Gershwin and Ravel caught live in Salzburg.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 49**



REISSUE/ARCHIVE
WAGNER Die fliegende Holländer
Holländer
sols; Bayreuth Festival / Wolfgang Sawallisch
Orfeo

Forget the mono sound, this is a superb performance of the *Dutchman* from 1959.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 100**

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FOR THE RECORD

Farewell to the great Montserrat Caballé

One of the great sopranos of our time, Montserrat Caballé, has died: she was 85. Though famed for her singing of *bel canto* and Italian Romantic opera, she had a very broad musical repertoire that embraced Wagner and Richard Strauss as well as Mozart. As Patrick O'Connor wrote in an October 2003 *Gramophone* 'Reputations' article: 'no diva in memory has sung such an all-encompassing amount of the soprano repertory, progressing through virtually the entire range of Italian light lyric, *lirico-spinto* and dramatic roles, including all the pinnacles of the *bel canto*, Verdi and *verismo* repertoires, whilst simultaneously being a remarkable interpreter of Salome, Sieglinde and Isolde.'

Born in Barcelona, she studied at the city's Liceu Conservatory and continued her studies in Switzerland, making her debut in Basel as Mimì in Puccini's *La bohème* in 1956. Soon she was singing Richard Strauss's *Salome*, a role that she continued to sing throughout her career. She joined the company in Bremen and sang there from 1959 to 1962, the year she made her return to her home city to appear at the Liceu Opera House as Strauss's *Arabella*.

In 1965, she stood in for Marilyn Horne at Carnegie Hall in Donizetti's *Lucrezia Borgia*, and a star was born ('Callas + Tebaldi = Caballé' was the headline in the *New York Times*). The 1960s saw her appear at Glyndebourne (as the Marschallin in Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier*), the Met (in Gounod's *Faust*, returning to sing four Verdi roles in *Il trovatore*, *Otello*, *La traviata* and *Luisa Miller*). In 1969 she would return to New York to sing Liù to Birgit Nilsson's *Turandot* (she would later record both parts).

The 1970s would see her expanding her repertoire to embrace most of Verdi's and Puccini's heroines as well as a large number of *bel canto* works. In 1974, she sang a series of performances of Bellini's *Norma* in three different productions – her single appearance at Orange, captured on film, enshrines perhaps her greatest stage performance of her career. As *Gramophone*'s vocal expert John Steane wrote in 2003, 'On a wind-swept, genius-driven night in 1974, they had greatness itself ... the role is sung and acted with such well-founded assurance that for once it fulfils its own legend, the embodiment of musical-dramatic sublimity in 19th-century opera.' (As with *Turandot*, Caballé would record



Montserrat Caballé: a singer of great versatility

both the title-role – opposite Domingo – and, later, the secondary role, that of Adalgisa, to Joan Sutherland's *Norma*.)

By the mid 1980s, she was scaling back her operatic work, but in 1987 she made a recording that would introduce her to a vast new audience – 'Barcelona', duetting with Freddie Mercury. It would, in 1992, become the anthem for the Summer Olympics hosted by Caballé's home town of Barcelona. No other singer 'crossed over' with such aplomb or so spectacularly. The single rode high in charts all over the world.

Sir Colin Davis, with whom she often performed and recorded, recalled in *Gramophone* that 'My memories of working with Caballé have a sort of glow, as somebody I always really loved working with. Her voice had great range and quite considerable colour.

And she wasn't proud. Like most great artists she was basically very humble, always trying to learn. When we recorded *Così* together she worked with a wonderful Italian coach and the result was some of the best Mozart recitative on disc. She was always lovely and, for me, never difficult to work with. And yet she also had a passionate side to her that could reach the dramatic extremes of a *Tosca* (which we also recorded). She is Spanish after all!

Caballé's career coincided with the Golden Age of recorded opera and she left a vast discography, capturing all her major roles, including *Aida* in Riccardo Muti's classic EMI set, Elisabeth de Valois for Giulini's *Don Carlo* (also EMI), on Barbirolli's Verdi Requiem (EMI), as Fiordiligi for Sir Colin Davis in Mozart's *Così fan tutte* (Philips), as Liù on Zubin Mehta's classic *Turandot* (with Pavarotti and Sutherland for Decca), as *Salome* for Leinsdorf (RCA) and numerous *bel canto* and Rossini roles. She also recorded many recital albums including a very fine Puccini collection with Sir Charles Mackerras (EMI), a Strauss album with Leonard Bernstein (DG) and duets with Shirley Verrett (RCA).

Showered with awards and honorary doctorates, Caballé was given *Gramophone*'s Lifetime Achievement Award in 2007.

Caballé was married to the Spanish tenor Bernabé Martí with whom she often performed and one of their two children, Montserrat Martí, is also a soprano.

Born April 12, 1933; died October 6, 2018

BBC Philharmonic names new Chief Conductor

The BBC Philharmonic has named Omer Meir Wellber as its new Chief Conductor. The 36-year-old Israeli conductor will take up the post in September 2019, on an initial contract of four years.

Aside from its broadcast profile on Radio 3, the Manchester-based BBC Philharmonic is also active in the studio, where its recordings for the Chandos label continue to meet with regular praise in *Gramophone*'s pages.

Wellber's current roles include Principal Guest Conductor at the Semperoper Dresden and, since 2009, Music Director of the Raanana Symphonette Orchestra, Israel. In January 2020 he also takes up the post of Music Director



Wellber: off to Manchester

of the Teatro Massimo di Palermo in Sicily.

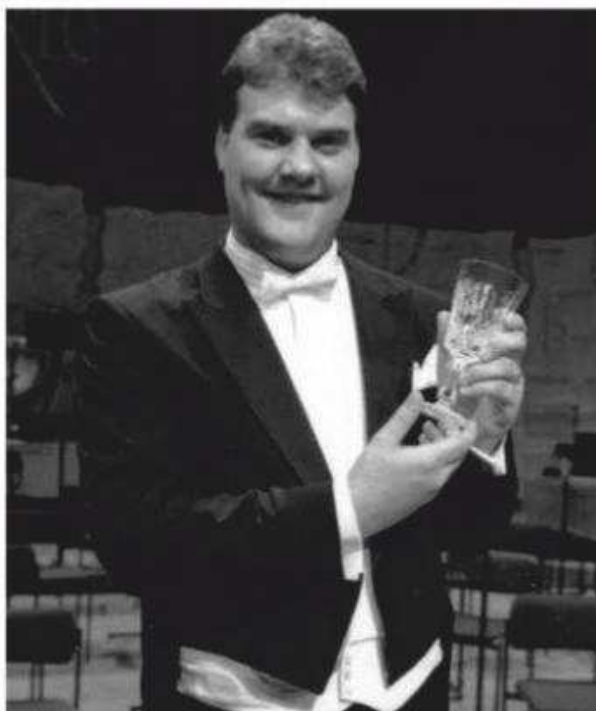
BBC set to open up its music archive

The BBC is set to make many recordings from its archives available to the public, for on-demand online listening.

With all that sits in the BBC's vaults – surely among the world's richest repository of classical performances – the announcement is an enticing prospect. Not only is the corporation home to prestigious performance groups including the BBC Symphony and BBC Philharmonic orchestras, and the BBC Singers – but also produces the Proms, plus major competitions including the BBC Young Musician and Cardiff Singer of the World.

According to the BBC's Director General Tony Hall, 'In an age of ever growing platforms and social media sharing, these historic and recent performances will be returned to the public as their rightful property' – a reference to the way the BBC is funded, by the UK public, through a TV licence fee.

Full details of exactly what will be unveiled are yet to be revealed, though it's understood that recordings will be



In the BBC's archive: the young Bryn Terfel in Cardiff

introduced into the public domain for limited broadcast and on-demand listening over time, on platforms including BBC iPlayer and a soon-to-be-launched audio app BBC Sounds, and that the BBC will seek to complement what the commercial sector offers in this area.

ONE TO WATCH

Liya Petrova Violin

The Bulgarian-born violinist Liya Petrova has a fine pedigree, having studied with Augustin Dumay, Antje Weithaas and Renaud Capuçon. In 2016 she shared first prize in the Carl Nielsen Violin Competition in Denmark with Jiyeon Lee (who was our One to Watch back in July). Both violinists went on to record Nielsen's Violin Concerto, which featured in the competition, for Orchid Classics, and Petrova's recording, coupled with Prokofiev's First Violin Concerto, is reviewed in this issue (see page 43). Andrew Farach-Colton praises her ravishingly expressive playing and exceptional tonal variety.

Nikolaj Szeps-Znaider, who was the President of the Jury at the Nielsen Competition, was hugely impressed by Petrova's playing: 'I was absolutely blown away by how she absorbed the Nielsen Violin Concerto – how it became hers. Liya is someone who is naturally curious, inquisitive, always searching and these are qualities which will ensure a future that only gets brighter and brighter.' Szeps-Znaider went on to invite Petrova to play Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto with him conducting the Odense



Symphony Orchestra, and she returns to Denmark in March as part of the celebrations to launch the next Carl Nielsen competition.

Petrova's talent, and the belief in her shown by such prestigious colleagues, suggest a great career ahead of her. Winning high-profile competitions does not guarantee lasting success, but Petrova – not yet 30 – has the perfect platform on which to build.

GRAMOPHONE *Online*

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Podcasts

In a fascinating new *Gramophone* Podcast, the baritone Sir Thomas Allen talks to Editor Martin Cullingford about his latest album, 'September Songs'. Drawing on personal favourites from the Great American Songbook, it sees the acclaimed singer step from the opera stage and Lieder recital hall for which he is best known, to the music of Broadway. In this conversation he discusses his love of



Sir Thomas Allen records 'September Songs'

this repertoire, with its melodic beauty, lyrical inventiveness and emotional directness – and his choice of songs.

Other podcasts to look out for include clarinettist Julian Bliss on his new album of works by Mozart and Weber; John Butt on his new recording of Handel's *Ode for St Cecilia*; and Director of Music at St Catharine's College, Cambridge, Edward Wickham on his album, 'Sing Levy Dew', with the St Catharine's Girls' Choir. You can download these and other podcasts – including our monthly in-depth discussion about the latest issue of the magazine – at our website or by searching for 'Gramophone magazine' in your podcast application of choice.

ARTISTS & *their* INSTRUMENTS

Mahan Esfahani on his new harpsichord, 'The Queen Mary'



“I'd moved to Prague to study with Zuzana Růžicková, and there met the Finnish harpsichord builder, Jukka Ollikka, a big experimenter. And what do you do in Prague? You drink beer, of course. Basically, the Czech beer industry was responsible for this instrument, because we sat, night after night, in a pub on the left bank of the Moldau, and talked – and as every tankard of beer was filled, the ideas would get more far-fetched. And we thought: do you know what would be great? To get an instrument which has a 16 foot register (that is, an octave below regular pitch). The 16 foot was on a few 18th-century

instruments but really quite common on harpsichords from the generation of Wanda Landowska, Arnold Dolmetsch, George Malcolm and Ralph Kirkpatrick – what we called the 'revival' harpsichordists. But of course a lot of the classical repertoire was also recorded on these instruments. I grew up listening to them, they meant a lot to me – especially someone like Landowska, you think you're hearing Bach himself – so in my mind the monumental sound of that 16 foot became inextricably tied to the music. I always loved it, and thought it great for Bach – this ferocity, this physicality.

What I can tell you about the soundboard is that it is made from a carbon-fibre composite, and that there was some pretty hi-tech business involved. Think about period soundboards on instruments by the likes of Ruckers or Taskin – what did the master do? The master's job was to plane the soundboard, and this is their great secret – where is it thin, where is it thick, what are the undulations? And Ollikka programmed these undulations to a sort of 3D printer.

It is rather freely based on instruments by Michael Mietke, an early 18th-century builder in Berlin. When you play a German instrument, especially a Berlin instrument, it just handles counterpoint so well, and you hear every line so clearly. The colour of the instrument might not be as jewel-like as a French one – a French instrument has so many colours, like a Persian carpet – whereas a German instrument is solidly built and the delineation of lines is so strong. It's actually 2.8m long – so we had to hammer out an extra bit of space in the technician's van to fit it in. (I shall never hear the end of it from him either!)

Did we also design it to also be used in modern music? Definitely. I need something loud. A lot of time I need to play concertos, so you need something that really can handle itself with these instruments. It's just a practical consideration. I'm using the instrument for Bach – including on the recording of the Toccatas that Hyperion will release next year – and for as much repertoire as I can. Michael Nyman sounds so good on this instrument, Poulenc sounds good, and Gary Carpenter is writing me a concerto for the instrument too. I look forward to a long life with this special beast of an instrument! ”

See page 73 for the review of Mahan Esfahani's latest album, *'The Passing Measures'*

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GRAMOPHONE GUIDE TO ... *Concert Aria*

Richard Wigmore on a form favoured primarily in the 18th century for wonderful vocal display and histrionics


Think concert aria and it's odds-on you'll think Mozart, with good reason. By the 1770s the stand-alone aria, or scena, typically filching *opera seria* librettos by Metastasio, had supplanted the solo cantata in public concerts; and it was Mozart, indulging his twin loves of theatricality and virtuoso display, who brought the genre to its apogee. Most of his 50-odd concert arias are for sopranos, star attractions in so many late-18th-century concerts. Mozart prided himself on catering to their individual strengths, informing his father: 'I like an aria to fit a singer as perfectly as a well-made suit of clothes.' In this same spirit he composed numerous 'insertion' arias, comic and serious, for revivals of operas by other composers, doubtless relishing the superiority of his own contributions. A delightful example is the mock-heroic 'Alma grande e cor nobile', K578, sung by a young lady with attitude in Cimarosa's *I due baroni*.

In elaborate *seria* style are the rather formal scenas showcasing the coloratura brilliance of Mozart's first love, Aloysia Weber. Of these the most spectacular is 'Popoli di Tessaglia', K316, whose pyrotechnics twice climax in a vertiginous top G. Most unlikely of Mozart's concert arias, perhaps, is 'Per questa bella mano', K612, where a *basso profundo* (originally Franz Gerl, the first Sarastro) vies in amorous ardour with a cavorting double bass.

Less demanding technically than Aloysia's arias are the two superb tragic scenas Mozart composed for his Prague friend Josepha Duschek: 'Ah lo previdi!', K272, and the chromatically tortuous 'Bella mia fiamma', K528. Both are eloquent testimony

to her sensitivity and musicianship. Opera and piano concerto fuse in 'Ch'io mi scordi di te', K505, created for Nancy Storace, the first Susanna in *Figaro*. The sensuous orchestral colouring (clarinets but no oboes) and subtle interplay of voice and keyboard give this beautiful scena a unique chamber-musical intimacy.

While Mozart perfected the concert aria, the genre did not quite die with him. Outstanding examples from the 1790s are Haydn's *Scena di Berenice*, premiered by the temperamental diva Brigida Banti at his final London concert (Haydn was unimpressed), and Beethoven's 'Ah! perfido', composed, like its probable model 'Bella mia fiamma', for Josepha Duschek. This is at once a Mozartian homage and a foretaste of Leonore's 'Abscheulicher!' in *Fidelio*. 'Ah! perfido' in turn was the initial inspiration for Mendelssohn's Metastasio scena 'Infelice!', an entertaining piece of Mozart-Beethoven pastiche that pairs soprano and violin obbligato.

A (very) late outlier in what was essentially an 18th-century genre is Alban Berg's 1929 Baudelaire setting *Der Wein*, commissioned by the Czech-Canadian soprano Ruzena Herlinger. Typically, Berg's lavishly scored concert aria (including saxophone and piano) is simultaneously esoteric and popular, leavening 12-tone technique with elements of tango and jazz. 

► Listen to our Concert Aria playlist on Qobuz



Mozart's first love: the soprano Aloysia Weber

IN THE STUDIO

● The **Fieri Consort** and **Chelys Consort of Viols** have collaborated on a recording for their own label celebrating the music of Michael East (1580-1648). His eight viol fantasies will be interspersed with vocal responses on a theme tracing the journey from despair to love, ending with a new work by Jill Jarman, 'Now I have done'. The recording was made in the chapel of Girton College, Cambridge. Due out in February.

● Recorder player **Lucie Horsch** has recorded an album of music by Bach, Handel, Sammartini, Naudot, Purcell and Van Eyck. She was joined by the **Academy of Ancient Music** - making their first recording for Decca in 20 years - directed by **Bojan Čičić**. The recording also saw guest appearances by lutenist **Thomas Dunford** and fellow recorder player **Charlotte Barbour-Condini** (a finalist in the BBC Young Musician competition in 2012). A February release is expected.

● Dacapo has recorded Bent Sørensen's Concertos for Piano and Trumpet with the **Norwegian Chamber Orchestra** - **Leif Ove Andsnes** was the solo pianist and **Tine Thing Helseth** the solo trumpeter. Recorded in Oslo in September, the album will be completed next year with the Clarinet Concerto to be played by Martin Fröst.

● **Thomas Adès**, in the role of pianist rather than composer, is set to go into the studio to record a programme of solo works by Janáček following live performances at Wigmore Hall in early December. The recording will be issued in 2020 by Signum.

● The *Gramophone* Award-winning team of **François-Xavier Roth** and **Les Siècles** has turned its attention to the music of Hector Berlioz (the 150th anniversary of whose death falls in 2019). **Stéphane Degout** sings *Les nuits d'été*, a rare outing for the baritone version, and **Tabea Zimmermann** takes the solo viola part in *Harold in Italy*. Expect a January release from our 2018 Label of the Year, Harmonia Mundi.

● MPR (Mike Purton Recordings) has completed a series of recordings of music by EJ Dent and Hindemith pupil Arnold Cooke (1906-2005). The four releases, played by the **Pleyel Ensemble** and pianist **Harvey Davies**, include the complete violin sonatas, Duo with Viola; the Piano Trio, Quartet and Quintet; chamber music with clarinet and flute, the oboe sonatas and the Sonata for Two Pianos. All works except the Violin Sonata No 2 are world premiere recordings. The recordings, due out soon, were made at the Royal Northern College of Music.

ORCHESTRA *Insight ...*

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The 'other' symphony orchestra with the word Vienna in its title was established just as the centre of musical gravity shifted back to that great city. The orchestra's mission was to stay ahead of the curve, presenting new music by big hitters while presenting affordable concerts for the Austrian capital's general populace. Both duties have shaped the sound of the orchestra as we know it: every bit Viennese in a vernacular sense (a recent *Gramophone* review suggested it still plays the music of the Strauss family better than any) but with an agility and flexibility instilled by the negotiation of new scores. This is the orchestra that introduced the world to both Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder* and Ravel's Piano Concerto for the Left Hand.

The writing of history has meant some early chief conductors, including the pivotal Oswald Kabasta, have been obscured by big names who were associated with the orchestra but never technically stewarded it: Furtwängler and Karajan both had their own 'series' with the ensemble and for contractual reasons the latter made just a single recording with it (Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto with Richter). As Chief in name as well as deed, Sawallisch stood on Karajan's shoulders and worked on the orchestra's signature sound, notably its velvety, low-calorie strings. Krips and Giulini followed. Some still claim the latter's 1974 account of Bruckner's Second is the work's greatest recording.

While the Vienna Philharmonic can still count on record labels queuing up to pay for its wares, its younger brother has innovated by necessity. Recordings of symphonic repertoire were sparse a decade ago, and after a single fruit from Fabio Luisi's chief conductorship – a fresh-faced Schumann cycle –



an in-house label was born under Philippe Jordan's watch and is mid-way through a Beethoven symphony odyssey to savour (a contributor to its Orchestra of the Year nomination at this year's *Gramophone* Awards). The label has included archive performances from Giulini and Carlos Kleiber and Viennese light music from local lad Manfred Honeck.

The record catalogue reminds us that, like the Philharmonic with which it shares both the Musikverein and Konzerthaus stages, the Symphony is both a concert orchestra and an opera orchestra. It reaps considerable stylistic benefits from its work at the Theater an der Wien and Bregenz Festival (it is resident at the latter), where its liveness, flexibility and notably fruity woodwinds are apparently appreciated either side of the pit. Incoming Chief Conductor, active recording artist and Austrian citizen Andrés Orozco-Estrada is sure to relish those characteristics and more. **Andrew Mellor**

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New chief at Oslo Phil

Klaus Mäkelä has been appointed Chief Conductor of the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra, succeeding Vasily Petrenko in 2020. The Finn, aged 22, currently holds posts as Principal Guest of the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Artistic Director of the 2019 Turku Music Festival and Artist in Association with the Tapiola Sinfonietta.

Soprano signing

Dutch label Pentatone has signed German soprano Anna Lucia Richter. The first album will be of Schubert lieder, with pianist Gerold Huber, due in February. The 2016 Boletti-Buitoni Trust Award recipient has already fared well in our pages: her 'beguiling, light soprano



Soprano Anna Lucia Richter: joining Pentatone

floats limpidly through the air, a thing of evanescent beauty', wrote Richard Fairman.

Chapel Royal release

The Choir of Her Majesty's Chapel Royal at Hampton Court Palace is releasing its first commercial recording in more than 20 years. The album, on Resonus Classics, and due out in December, will be of music by one-time Gentleman of the Chapel Royal, Thomas Tallis.

This month on Medici

Gramophone's November playlist of fascinating film includes Ian Bostridge with the Berlin Philharmonic and Sir Simon Rattle in Britten's *Nocturne*, Sir Antonio Pappano conducting Brahms in Verbier, and a masterclass from Yannick Nézet-Séguin. For these and more visit **medici.tv** and type 'Gramophone selects' in the search box.

FROM WHERE I SIT

What is it exactly that makes the BBC Proms such a special festival, asks Edward Seckerson




It's at this time of the year, with yet another Henry Wood Promenade season behind us, that the question perennially arises – where do those huge BBC Proms audiences disappear to for the rest of the year? Do they sit in wait for the next season? Do they carry their new-found enthusiasms forward to the South Bank or Barbican? How many converts to so-called 'classical' music do the Proms make each year?

There are the hardcore musos, of course – regular concert-goers, record collectors, readers of *Gramophone*. I know from my own circle that the Proms season constitutes the most concentrated period of shared-opinions, mutual enthusiasm and healthy disagreement in the whole year. This year brought its universally admired highlights: Iván Fischer's ripely characterised Mahler Fourth with the Budapest Festival Orchestra where the first horn came down from his perch at the rear of the orchestra to duet with the renegade fiddler in the second movement and 'angelic' soprano Anna Lucia Richter slowly, gracefully, wafted through the orchestra during the blissful closing bars of the slow movement to dispense her tales of 'The Heavenly Life'; there was Edward Gardner's exceptional Sibelius Second with the Bergen Philharmonic; there was Yannick Nézet-Séguin's magnificent Bruckner Fourth with the Rotterdam Philharmonic, gloriously instinctive in shape and resonance; and there was the Berlin Philharmonic under their new music director Kirill Petrenko – quite simply some of the most spectacular, incandescent playing I have ever heard – and that includes the Karajan era.

One makes discoveries at the Proms. Petrenko was one. Lise Davidsen was another. I've rarely heard the soprano role in Verdi's *Requiem* sung with such presence, technical sureness, and thrilling engagement. I shall be following her progress with great interest.

And there are the opportunities to hear works which no sane promoter would ever touch on account that they would surely empty the Festival Hall or Barbican – works like Per Nørgård's Third Symphony. Again this piece – and the huge admiration (and bewilderment) it has carried with it since 1976 – was new to me. I got lost in its 50 minutes (literally and metaphorically), I marvelled at its beauty, and I can honestly say that I have never really heard anything quite like it. But it held a pretty packed Albert Hall in thrall.

Did I say packed? Yes, I did. Because that's the truly amazing thing about the Proms season – on most nights it's a hot ticket no matter how adventurous the programming. How so? Here's my theory. Firstly it's taken way in excess of 100 years to build the brand – and what a brand; secondly it's something that the widest cross-section of our communities want to be a part of because it's unique, it's affordable, it's inclusive, and it actively encourages the musically inquisitive among us to give the new and the outlandish (alongside the familiar) a shot. Best of all, its communality and absence of intimidation (which classical music can sometimes engender) gives everyone a voice. My regular bus home from the hall is a hive of loudly expressed opinions. Long may it be so. 

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THE POWER OF THE HUMAN VOICE



Acclaimed tenor Ian Bostridge explores the human voice's capacity to soothe, enrapture and provoke, particularly in musical responses to war where text and vocal line can combine to visceral effect

To have a voice': this is one of the most powerful metaphors in our language. In any field of creative endeavour – from poetry, novel-writing, film-making, painting and sculpture to philosophy and the art of cooking – it is a term of approval and a recognition of the individuality which has been at the centre of European notions of artistic genius since the Renaissance. The ability to give voice is a crucial feature of our humanity; the larynx, apparently designed by natural selection with a primary role as an anti-choking device, has opened up a whole new world, the world of language, which started as audible exchange between our distant ancestors millennia ago, probably on the African savannah. Other species had developed forms of emotionally charged vocalisation. Indeed, we can find centres for the processing of such cries and whimpers in the brains of other primates. But only in the human being did emerging consciousness conspire with the evolution of the vocal tract to create a world of sounds which could so mysteriously weave together the subjective and the objective, reason and the emotions.

The earliest song I recall from childhood isn't a lullaby but the Beatles song 'Yellow Submarine'

Song was there at the beginnings of our humanity, and is also there at the beginnings of our individual lives as human beings. I don't remember the lullabies I was sung in the cradle, but I do remember singing lullabies to my infant children, some of them beautiful songs with quite inappropriate words of deep sadness which I tried to veil as I lulled them to sleep – favourite folk songs like 'O Waly, Waly' ('O love is handsome and love is fine ... but when it is old it groweth cold') or 'The Salley Gardens' with its words of Yeatsian melancholy.

The earliest song I myself remember from my childhood is something quite different: the Beatles song 'Yellow Submarine', released in August 1966. I must have been around two when I first heard it on the radio. Like many others (sports fans, striking workers, lots of children) my family appropriated it and added new words ('We all live in ...' – add your own address here). 'Yellow Submarine' is a fine example of the way songs circulate culturally. 'We were trying to write a children's song,' Paul McCartney explained. 'That was the basic idea. And there's nothing more to be read into it than there is in the lyrics of any children's song'. That didn't stop hordes of critics reading arcane symbolism and political comment into those lyrics, though. In the end, a song for children has become a sort of folk song, released from the circumstances and context of its creation (a bit like the famous 'Lindenbaum' from Schubert's *Winterreise*).

There were other songs with strangely inappropriate words for class-singing ('A-Roving',

with its barely concealed undertow, a somewhat sleazy shanty); hymns sung at church and in the car with my father; and there were the singers I heard on the radio and on record, popular singers but ones whose vocal techniques and approach to word-painting owed something at least to a long tradition which embraced the classical as well as the jazz-inflected – Andy Williams, Perry Como, Tony Bennett and, above all, Frank Sinatra. Sinatra, the Italian-American lyric baritone who recorded his own album of operatic numbers and his own version of a Tchaikovsky art song, 'None but the lonely heart'. These were my early song influences; and if the discovery of the rich vein of German song, the Lied, in my early teenage years had something of the quality of an epiphany, I've realised later on in life that these earlier influences must have played a formative role, all the stronger for having been fragmentary and largely unformulated.

The first time I heard Schubert's famous setting of Goethe's ballad, 'Erlkönig', was in a German class when I was about 14 or 15, and it bowled me over. My response to it was an instinctive one and in retrospect it straightaway undermines one of the clichés about Lieder singing that is repeated time and again. It's all about the words, we are told; and I've often said the same myself, setting up the implicit contrast between the vulgarity of sheer vocalism, and the more refined appreciation of a less-glorious instrument engaging with text. And certainly, inflection of the text is one of the key tasks of the Lieder singer. Yet, when I first heard 'Erlkönig' – while it was important that it was words that were being sung, that it wasn't some sort of extended and bizarre vocalise – it was not the meaning of the words so much as the sound of them that drew me in: the non-musical sounds (the sibilants, fricatives and plosives) in the context of a drama of which I knew the broad outlines, delivered by a singer with an extraordinary genius for inhabiting a song and (in this case) bringing to life its characters – the stern but increasingly anxious father, the terrified boy, the insinuating and ultimately death-dealing Erlking all on a ride to perdition. The colour of the voice was important, and Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau had one of the most beautiful *mezza voces* in the history of recorded sound, but the nature of his address to us, as his imagined, long-playing audience, was more crucial; as was the dramatic inflection supplied by Gerald Moore's brilliant accompaniment.

That epiphanic recording was made in the '60s when 'Fidi', as he was affectionately known, was still in his prime as a recording artist, a master of the genre, much influenced, it is said, by microphone gurus like Ella Fitzgerald and the said Sinatra. If, for me, it was a miniature radio drama, I had the opportunity to see the song actually staged a few years later in one of Fischer-Dieskau's song recitals at the Queen Elizabeth Hall in London with the pianist Hartmut Höll. This was a gripping piece of theatre, as constrained in its rules and methods as Japanese Noh or Kabuki, utterly austere (two



The great, and hugely influential, German baritone Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau: in concert in 1967, accompanied by Gerald Moore (left); and in rehearsal with Hartmut Höll

men in black suits with a powerful black instrument between them) and utterly compelling, as, indeed, was the whole recital. I remember particularly the preternatural stillness which the singer conjured in one of the encores, 'Meerestille' ('Becalmed at Sea'), singing so quietly that you really could have heard the proverbial pin drop as the whole audience leant forward as one. Yet, when I listened to a BBC broadcast of the recital a few days later in the car, I was astonished by how threadbare the experience seemed without the physical presence of the performer.

You could say that this was something to do with the degeneration of the voice with age and use; and that such degeneration is less apparent in recital than close up on radio or record. But, in fact, there are even later recordings of the same singer which I count among the most moving in the genre – the Op 39 *Liederkreis* of Schumann with Alfred Brendel, for example, made in the 1980s. Weaknesses in the voice, a palpable sense of struggle can, paradoxically, be an artistic boon. No, I think it is simply that recital and recording are two different things.

In the studio, a song should be staged and sung and inhabited to exploit the advantages of the medium and to make allowances for the absence of the actual body of the performer: radio drama, as it were. Live recordings are a strange halfway house. I recently completed with the pianist Julius Drake a series of live recordings of four all-Schubert recitals on the Wigmore Hall's own label. These were programmes which we had lived with and performed over 20 years, and we were keen to document them. At the same time, the whole notion of documenting performances which are live, and have been conceived as such, is fraught with difficulty. I'm sure that the knowledge that the songs were being recorded involved some compromise in what we presented to the audience in the Wigmore Hall. Less mobility on stage, if only for the sake of the microphone; and perhaps less expressionism of delivery. It has to be remembered, though, that studio recording can require its own brand of exaggeration and intensity, depending on the song – the balance between the lyrical and the dramatic is necessarily different when only hearing is involved.

The battle between the lyrical and the dramatic in Schubert song performance goes right back to the Schubert circle itself

This is an area in which the invention of the gramophone has confused our responses to some degree. The demands of perfection have increased, and the risk-taking that is part of any electrifying musical performance (but especially a drama-infused Lied performance) has been discouraged. On the other hand, the ease of recording nowadays, and the sheer proliferation of licensed and unlicensed material on YouTube, make it easier to worry less. All sorts of recordings jostle for attention in the ether – archival, studio, live, patched, recorded with microphones that are good, bad, or indifferent – and in the end it takes us back to the unrepeatability and ineffability of the singular live performance.

Lieder can be performed in many different ways; and one of the glories of the tradition which has grown and diversified since the early 19th century is the sheer multiplicity of approaches on offer. The battle between the lyrical and the dramatic in the performance of Schubert song goes right back to the Schubert circle itself, whose members after the composer's death disagreed about the proper way to sing the Lied. Johann Michael Vogl had been at the centre of Schubert's life as a song composer. The latter enthusiastically endorsed Vogl's style, writing in a letter to a friend that 'the manner in which Vogl sings and the way I accompany, as though we were one at such a moment, is something quite new and unheard of'. 'The master of declamatory song' one contemporary called Vogl; others complained of his 'dandyism'. It was Leopold von Sonnleithner who sought to lay down the law about Schubert style, criticising Vogl by implication for the 'violence' of his expression which tended, as Sonnleithner had it, to 'impede the flow of the musical idea in its purity'. Sonnleithner preferred the approach of the dedicatee of *Die schöne Müllerin*, Karl Freiherr von Schönstein, whom Liszt praised for his performances of technical perfection delivered with the 'simple sensitivity of an amateur'. Spaun, perhaps Schubert's most devoted friend, sprang to Vogl's defence, while many praised his fervour, his clarity and his vision.

Most contemporary commentators certainly admired Vogl; and Schubert's approval ought, surely, to be decisive. Nevertheless the preference for 'singers with good voices and just a natural way of singing',



A Songmaker's Almanac recording in 1981: (L-R) Felicity Lott, Anthony Rolfe Johnson, Richard Jackson, Ann Murray and, at the piano, Graham Johnson

as Sonnleithner put it, for those without 'advanced aesthetic culture' who were 'naïve' or 'unaffectedly noble' in style – this continues to be a theme in writing about the performance of the Lied to this day. For Sonnleithner, it was partly a matter of snobbery: a preference for the noble amateur over the cunning and implicitly insincere professional. More generally, though, it is a case of the fantasy of a pure, unmediated, 'natural' art so beautifully encapsulated by Tolstoy's notion of peasant singing, with its 'full and naïve conviction that the whole meaning of a song lies in the words, and that the tune comes of itself, and that apart from the words there is no tune, which exists only to give measure to the words'; such an 'unconsidered tune' is 'like the song of a bird'. Schubert song is so much more than this: it is art. And so Schönstein's favourite *Die schöne Müllerin* can be sung, with Schönstein, in naïve style; or it can be sung, to use Schiller's term, in a sentimental style, more self-consciously, more ironically, with more psychological awareness.

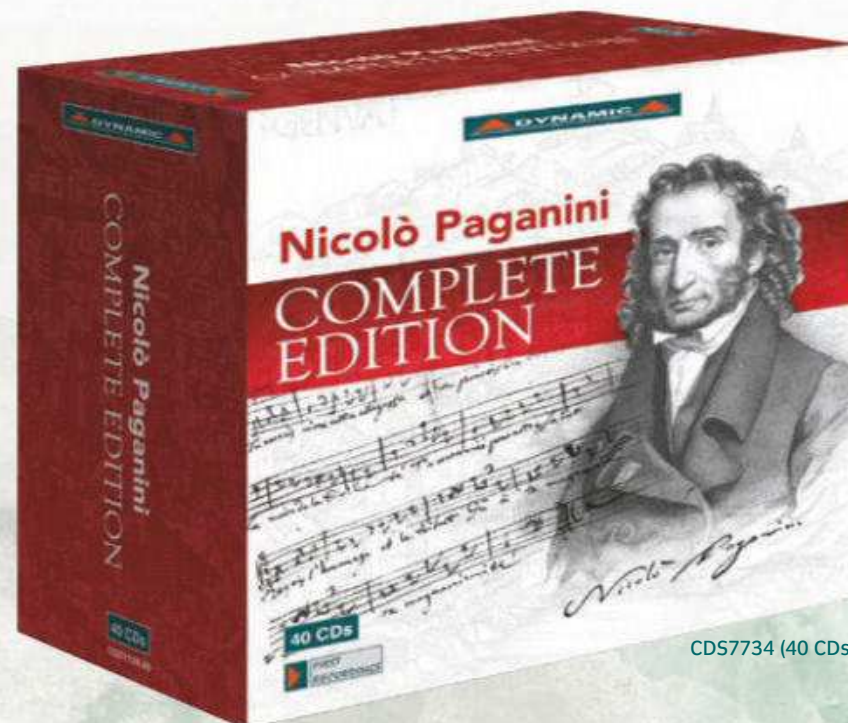
My experience of living composers is that they're mostly keen for us to take liberties so as to create vital, moving performances

The uniform application of what we might call the naïve style is often recommended, along with the practice of a sort of emotional detachment, reinforced by the notion of the performer as a humble vessel for the composer's genius. Taking the composer's instructions seriously, 'realising' the score, is an important part of the discipline that is classical music; and it distinguishes the classical from more popular traditions. But, in the end, the composers are (mostly) dead, and what they have left us is a resource to create vital and moving performances – no more, no less. If that means taking liberties, then a well-prepared, and humble, performer is at liberty to take them. My experience of (living) composers is that they are, more often than not, keen for the liberties to be taken. Of the many recordings I have heard, my favourites are burning testaments to the ability of a great artist to sing a piece of music into a new and revelatory dimension; to transcend, with imaginative intensity, the score: Janet Baker in her famous EMI recording of Elgar's *Sea Pictures* is one pre-eminent example.

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Creating programmes is one of the unsung pleasures of the art of song. Graham Johnson's innovative Songmaker's Almanac series, with that characteristic mixture of the literary and the musical, of the sublime, the educative and the more uncomplicatedly entertaining, was a crucial part of creating a new audience for song in the 1970s and '80s, an audience of which I was a part. But in my own programming, in recital and on disc, I've often been more influenced by the austere example of Fischer-Dieskau, with his avoidance of too much miscellany and preference for the single-composer recital. Certainly, 'composing' those four all-Schubert evenings was intensely rewarding and gave me a deeper insight into the way that Schubert's dramatic genius works through song.

My new collection of songs for CD with Sir Antonio Pappano, the latest fruit of a longterm relationship with the company that was EMI and is now Warner Classics, is called 'Requiem: The Pity of War'. It started out as an idea for a book. I had been planning to write on Monteverdi, and was struggling. Sitting in a rehearsal for Britten's *War Requiem* in Montreal (for my 73rd performance), I had the idea that a book culminating in Britten's masterpiece, but approaching it through other musical responses to war that were in my song repertoire, might be the right thing for November 2018. The synergy of a simultaneous CD release made it irresistible; but in the end,



Recording 'Requiem' with Pappano at the Church of St Jude-on-the-Hill in February 2018

the time constraints of writing something for the anniversary of the Armistice killed the book project. The songs remained and they form a miscellaneous but at the same time powerful programme.

Three songs from Mahler's *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (which I first heard on disc in the famous Szell/Dieskau/Schwarzkopf recording from the 1960s) bear witness both to the deep European roots of internecine conflict encoded in these 'folk' poems, and to Mahler's own awareness of the militarisation of the Habsburg ethos: a reflection of Europe as armed camp, and a protest against it.

George Butterworth's settings of AE Housman's *A Shropshire Lad* were composed in 1911/12. Death-haunted, they also bear the marks of Housman's dark consciousness of the Second Boer War. Other 'lads', fighting in Flanders in 1914, carried dog-eared copies of the poems into the trenches. Butterworth himself was killed at the Battle of the Somme in 1916.

Rudi Stephan, one of the bright hopes of German music in the early 20th century, died a double death: on the Galician front in what is now Ukraine in 1915, shot through the head by a sniper; and when bombing during the Second World War destroyed the archive of his manuscripts in Worms. The songs of *Ich will dir singen ein Hohelied* are notable for the subtle eroticism of both Stephan's music and the texts by Gerda von Robertus; composed at the outset of the Great War, they escape from its morbid grip and speak a language all of their own.



Intense experience: 'Requiem' is a portrait of musical responses to war, from Butterworth's 'death-haunted' Shropshire Lad to the morbidly gripping songs of Rudi Stephan

The disc ends with Kurt Weill's settings of poems by Walt Whitman: with words by a stretcher-bearer during the American Civil War and music by a German Jewish refugee from Nazism, the cycle is a bridge between the first mechanised slaughter (the Gatling gun, intended by its inventor to demonstrate the futility of war and deployed in the US in the 1860s) and the horrors of the 1940s.

This is one of those projects that started life as a disc, but it will emerge as the thing itself, a recital on December 5 at London's Barbican; and Pappano and I will end the programme with Britten's setting of four English war poems by the pacifist William Soutar from his cycle *Who are these children?* As a set, it culminates in perhaps the most chilling song I have ever performed in recital, the darkest, and the one which provokes the most visceral response, with a terrifying electricity between performers and audience: 'The Children'. The poem was written during the Spanish Civil War, the song in the midst of the Vietnam War. It speaks, distressingly, to every generation.

The Children, by William Soutar

Upon the street they lie
Beside the broken stone:
The blood of children stares from the broken stone.

Death came out of the sky
In the bright afternoon:
Darkness slanted over the bright afternoon.

Again the sky is clear
But upon earth a stain:
The earth is darkened with a darkening stain.

A wound which everywhere
Corrupts the hearts of men:
The blood of children corrupts the hearts of men.

Silence is in the air:
The stars move to their places:
Silent and serene the stars move to their places.

But from earth the children stare
With blind and fearful faces:
And our charity is in the children's faces.

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'None but the Lonely Heart'
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► Read our review of Ian Bostridge's 'Requiem: The Pity of War' on page 91

Tenebrae
Dame Sarah Connolly
Aurora Orchestra
Nigel Short cond.

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SIGCD557

A WALK WITH IVOR GURNEY

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JOHN DOWLAND
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Grace Davidson, Lute
David Miller, Lute

Nature's Solace
Schumann 12 Gedichte Op. 15
Kilpinen Lieder from Op. 92, 98 & 99
Brahms 5 Lieder Op. 94
Stephan Loges Bass Baritone
Iain Burnside Piano

STEPHAN LOGES
IAIN BURNSIDE piano

Bass-baritone Stephan Loges and Iain Burnside a collection of rarely recorded works that explore concepts of lost youth, the transience of life and the comforting presence of nature.

SIGCD554

Nature's Solace
Schumann 12 Gedichte Op. 15
Kilpinen Lieder from Op. 92, 98 & 99
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Stephan Loges Bass Baritone
Iain Burnside Piano

Nature's Solace
Schumann 12 Gedichte Op. 15
Kilpinen Lieder from Op. 92, 98 & 99
Brahms 5 Lieder Op. 94
Stephan Loges Bass Baritone
Iain Burnside Piano

FACING THE FUTURE, HEAD ON

Edward Gardner has been driving his Bergen orchestra forward by performing and recording music outside its comfort zone, not least Berlioz's *Grande Messe des morts*, writes **Andrew Mellor**

‘Where do you stay when you're here?’ I ask Edward Gardner during the course of our conversation in a boardroom at the Grieg Hall in Bergen, where floor-to-ceiling windows frame a chunk of Fløyen, the mountain that towers majestically over the city centre. ‘I've got an apartment, up there,’ Gardner responds, pointing directly at the mountainside, ‘and it's utterly beautiful.’ Then he thumbs his phone in search of a photograph: ‘This was the view from my balcony at 11 o'clock last night.’ It would take a composer and an orchestra to adequately describe what he showed me.

I was surprised when, five years ago, Gardner was announced as the new Chief Conductor of the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra from 2015. It is something of a tradition that British conductors head north early in their careers; both Daniel Harding and Robin Ticciati accepted their first chief conductorships in Scandinavia, taking advantage of the generous rehearsal provision and the general air of calm that hangs over orchestras up here.

Gardner, in contrast, had already led a London opera company and held a title at the CBSO when he was announced as Andrew Litton's successor in Norway's second city. But seeing the view from that balcony – from which Gardner can survey one of the most beautiful cities in the world, and pick out his lakeside concert hall of an evening over a glass of wine – you have to conclude that anybody would be mad not to want to work here.

There was, says Gardner, nothing strategic about his decision to accept the job beyond his need to be with a symphony orchestra. ‘I had been cocooned in this London opera world for 10 years,’ he says, referring to his music directorship of ENO and previously of Glyndebourne on Tour. ‘When you're Chief Conductor you build up a shorthand for what you're looking for that allows you to work at a much higher level. Somehow it's different at an opera company, where you're waiting for a production to form itself. Here, we're finding the language ourselves. And it's not a secret anymore how good this orchestra is.’

For that, we have record companies to thank. Gardner's tenure in Bergen constitutes a meeting of a prolific recording orchestra with a prolific recording conductor. He had already made discs of Janáček and Berio with the ensemble before he arrived as its boss. Since then he has recorded Schoenberg, Bartók, Sibelius and even Grieg here (the Norwegian composer

is Bergen's most famous son, his music hallowed ground in the city). A few hours after our conversation, Gardner will take on Berlioz's gargantuan *Grande Messe des morts*, conducting the first of three performances that will form the basis of a new recording for Chandos.

Gardner is contracted to Chandos, and the label is chronicling his orchestral relationships from Melbourne to Maida Vale. ‘I often question whether it's better to be old-fashioned and only record with “my” orchestra,’ Gardner says, ‘but it seems like the modern way to have a wide diet and use different ones, just as this orchestra records with other conductors and other labels.’ Does he match the repertoire to the ensemble? ‘I'd probably give two different answers to that question in two different weeks. It's a huge treat to have recorded Elgar with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, for example. But I'm really not very strategic. The difference here [in Bergen] is that we can put repertoire we want to record into concerts. I learned early on how valuable that can be. With this orchestra, you get to the highest level by gestating rather than pushing for things quickly.’

His comment reflects the Bergen orchestra's distinctive, old-world sound (it is one of the oldest in Scandinavia) but also Nordic orchestral traditions: the players don't work weekends, instead rehearsing a programme from Monday, playing it on Thursday nights with a repeat on Fridays. For the likes of Ticciati, Harding and others, it proved the perfect way to build repertoire and work on technique. But for all the penetrative possibilities of four days' rehearsal and what Gardner cites as the ‘massive benefit’ of repeating concerts, there are some who find the Nordic orchestral set-up complacent, unambitious and even lazy.

‘I have to be honest and say that both arguments are true, in a way,’ says Gardner when I put that to him. ‘I push the orchestra very hard, just as I push myself. And sometimes, as on a day like today, I'm fighting for it. But the positives are unbelievable. Serious, deep thought goes into how a piece should sound here. A back-desk violinist will approach me over lunch and tell me they've spent four days thinking about a particular phrase in Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony. In London, people don't remember if they played Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony yesterday. So you could say the temperature is slightly lower, and it's my job to keep the energy up.’

‘With the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, you get to the highest level by gestating rather than pushing for things quickly’



PHOTOGRAPHY: BENJAMIN EALOVEGA

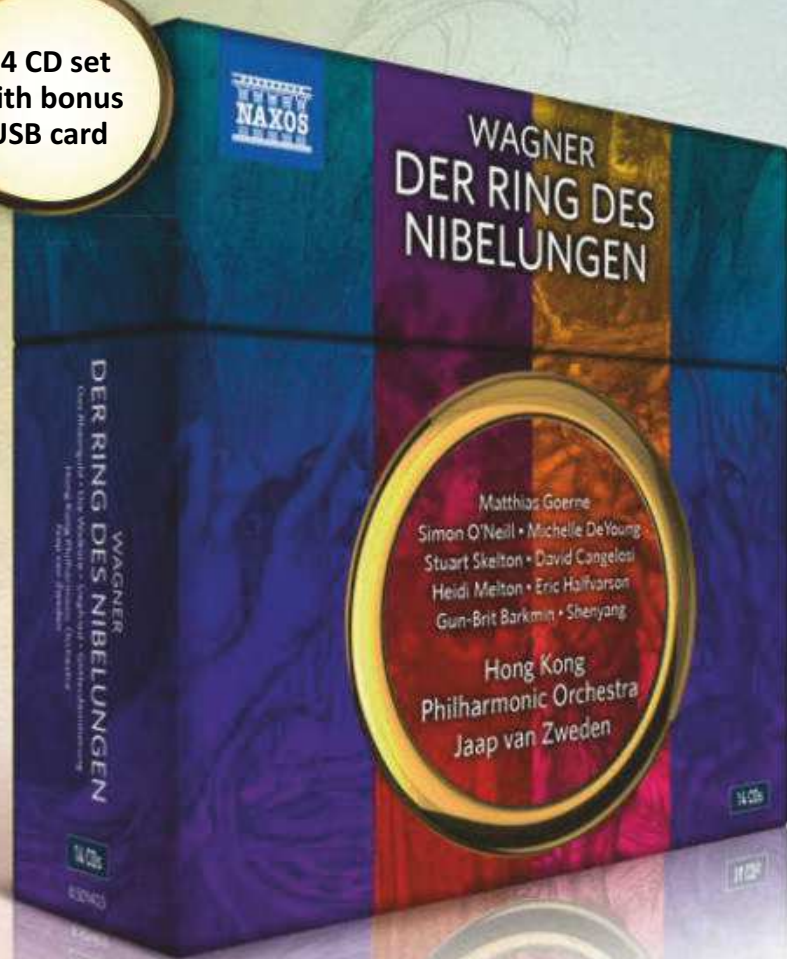


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Just as the New York Philharmonic might reflect the cut-and-thrust of Manhattan, the fact that ‘everyone goes to their mountain huts at weekends’ might have something to do with the Bergen Philharmonic’s identity and its misty, serene strings in particular. ‘We tend to play “Death of Åse” from *Peer Gynt* quite a lot as an encore and they do something very special with that,’ says Gardner. ‘There’s this refinement, this soulful beauty that they get out of it. It’s lovely and woody, like the nature that surrounds this city. It’s funny: they tell you that they’re bored of playing Grieg. But when they do, it’s beautiful, amazing.’

Bergen, Grieg and Norwegian identity are inseparable from this most civic of orchestras. At its core is a group of local musicians who trained at the same conservatory (which may help explain its distinctive sound). An excellent local youth orchestra that Gardner also conducts feeds it players, while guest conductors frequently take rehearsals in Norwegian. But listening to its recent recording of Bartók’s virtuoso *Concerto for Orchestra* under Gardner, you hear colour, attitude and swagger – qualities that remind you of its links to the US through Andrew Litton and a number of American players. ‘It is very much a Norwegian orchestra but it has an international membership and is an organisation looking outwards,’ says Gardner. ‘You can feel like you’re on the edge of Europe here geographically, but I feel we’re very connected to central Europe and to the UK, too.’

The ferry linking Bergen and Norway to Newcastle-upon-Tyne on the east coast of England made its last crossing in 2008. But those two countries, defined in so many ways by their relationships to the sea, must have felt momentarily



Gardner harnesses the gargantuan forces of Berlioz’s *Messe*

‘I’ve realised that Berlioz’s ability with colours and sounds is not just unique, it’s completely emotionally connected’

connected again when Gardner conducted a concert performance of Britten’s *Peter Grimes* here in 2017. It was, proclaims Gardner with widened eyes, ‘an unbelievable experience’. ‘This side of Norway is effectively a series of small, isolated villages,’ he says, referring to the geology of the west coast where fjords penetrate deep into the mainland, each divided by towering mountains. ‘I even discovered that the Norwegians have a special word for the monster in the community, the shunned outsider who goes crazy.’ [The word is ‘bygdedyret’, literally ‘the village animal’, coined by the Norwegian writer and journalist Tor Jonsson (1916-1951).]

Like *Grimes*, Berlioz’s *Grande Messe* is new to the ensemble and part of the conductor’s efforts to push the orchestra and its audience on to unfamiliar ground. ‘It’s been interesting to see the orchestra’s reaction,’ says Gardner. ‘When they heard this passage in the *Agnus Dei*, with single notes from off-stage trombones answered by the flutes on stage – low register to high register, something rumbling underground and then this almost white noise on top – they turned to each other in disbelief. It was like they were saying, “Where’s the *music* in this?”’

Gardner, too, appears as fascinated and mystified by the Berlioz as he is enchanted and absorbed by it. ‘I started out thinking of it as almost like sound art, like a sound installation,’ he says. ‘But recently I’ve realised that Berlioz’s ability with colours and sounds is not just totally unique, it’s completely emotionally connected. You feel the total commitment in everything he wrote. You have all these extremes, but nothing is done for show.’



'It's not a secret anymore how good this orchestra is': Gardner with his Bergen players at the Grieghallen

'Extremes' always present a challenge for recording engineers. While we might expect Chandos's famous sonic spaciousness to capitalise on the work's masses – its four brass bands, battalion of drums and numerous off-stage effects added to an already voluminous orchestra, choir and tenor soloist – it's those tender moments when textures are reduced to nearly nothing that test Gardner's regular producer, Brian Pidgeon, the most. 'When you're watching an orchestra playing *triple piano*, the act of seeing that physical gesture from a mass of people can manipulate how we sense the volume – it can make it feel louder. It's a matter of how much actually registers. We spent some time talking about the balance of the wind chords at the start of the *Agnus Dei* against the after-burn of the violas; how much should you even be aware of the violas? In a sense, you want them to be almost subliminal, like they don't exist at all.' (In the dress rehearsal that evening, the moment in question sounds suitably aloof.)

'Any performance should be about the night – something that can't be repeated, but whose perfume can be captured'

Gardner talks of the loneliness and fragility built into the piece, never more apparent than in the silences that apparently become longer and heavier as it proceeds. 'I've been using the word "lost" a lot,' he says. He refers to the end of the *Rex tremendae*, when the gargantuan opening statement returns with all the bands but then the texture suddenly hushes, each voice type offering lonely 'salva me' statements until the sopranos are left singing it three times, as quietly as possible. 'That's extraordinary. It feels so lonely, so moving, and the contrast makes it all the more emotionally connected. It's not about Berlioz doing something big or doing something small; it's about him focusing the spotlight.'

A key accomplice in realising the delicate atmosphere of the piece is Gardner's Chorus Master, Håkan Matti Skrede. 'One of the real pleasures of my job is having Håkan Matti here and working alongside him; in that short time the choirs have become something really special,' he says. For the Berlioz, the small, professional Edvard Grieg Choir was joined by the orchestra's own chorus, the Collegium Musicum Choir and singers from the UK's Royal Northern College of Music. 'I'd say the temperament is of a professional choir but with

the energy of an amateur one. I think it's a total miracle, actually,' says Gardner.

It isn't just the Chandos recordings that are bringing Gardner's work in Bergen to the world. The Berlioz was also broadcast on state television and the orchestra's streaming service, Bergen PhilLive, whose archive contains plenty of rich performances including a number from the 2017/18 artist-in-residence (and recent *Gramophone* Award recipient), locally born soprano Lise Davidsen. Just as Scandinavia gave the world Spotify, so its orchestras have been among the pioneers of streaming technology.

Gardner effuses about the benefits of streaming, but also the spirit of it. 'Streaming gives you one performance from one evening; it should feel raw and exclusive somehow,' he says.

'The best of that is when you feel you're sharing what the people in the concert hall felt. To be honest, that's the central thought with all my music-making. It should be about the night – something that can't be repeated or remembered, but whose perfume can somehow be captured. I love that. I think it's gorgeous that something can be so beautiful and so ephemeral at the same time.'

So where does that leave the old-fashioned paid-for recording which, as in the pages of this magazine, invites comparison with other recorded versions of the same work? 'When I started recording I was really sure not to put down mainstream things, which is why I did lots of Polish repertoire, a huge passion for me,' says Gardner. But as he's moved into more mainstream repertoire, comparisons have inevitably been drawn. Does he subscribe to the idea of recording as an attempt to achieve something definitive? 'I think that's a myth,' he responds. 'You only have to listen to great artists' versions of the same works 30 years apart to hear that.'

This is where Gardner's belief in streaming and his prolific work with Chandos might appear to converge. 'When you're doing a live recording, as here, you want to maintain the feeling of a performance but give the idea that it's being cared for incredibly well – that it has nothing in its way and is a pure expression of that music,' he says. 'If streaming is helping us to move away from the idea that there is such thing as a definitive version of a piece, then I completely support it.'

Any performance of Berlioz's massive score is an event. Perhaps that justifies Chandos lugging its equipment here: to produce a permanent record of such an event that's as 'well cared-for' as Gardner's looks to be. It wouldn't have happened without a cocktail of stakeholders including all those performing groups, the Bergen Festival and Norway's state broadcaster NRK. Still, it can feel bizarre that music on such a scale, and at such a level of professionalism, is made in this remote city on the edge of Europe with a population of less than 300,000. But therein lies another blessing of Scandinavian musical life and the sense of community that holds it together. 'I love the idea that everyone here knows about this orchestra and its history,' says Gardner. 'Sometimes, when I've been whinging about things – demanding that we find a 16th tuba – people have had to remind me that this town is the size of Northampton.' For the rest of us, that only makes Bergen's musical prowess seem all the more miraculous. **G**

► Read *Gramophone's* review of Berlioz's *Grande Messe des morts* on page 79

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BLANK CANVAS, *no boundaries*

From Dvořák at the Proms to an all-Russian disc, with some wacky transcriptions and street art along the way, cellist Daniel Müller-Schott is bowing in all directions, finds **Richard Bratby**

Imagine being the soloist in the Dvořák Cello Concerto: sitting there, with the orchestra at your back, and feeling that great opening *tutti* crash around you in the knowledge that in a couple of minutes, at most, you face one of the supreme technical and emotional challenges in the entire cello repertoire. It's a dazzling summer morning when I meet Daniel Müller-Schott in a Kensington hotel lobby, but we both know that a few hours from now he'll be facing exactly that moment of truth in front of 5000 listeners at the Royal Albert Hall. We're here to talk about his new disc of romantic Russian music for cello and orchestra, but at this precise instant, there's no avoiding his imminent ascent of Mount Dvořák – though if he's anxious, he doesn't show it.

'I've played it so many times,' he says. 'It's probably the concerto that I've played the most over the years, and in different places. To bring it to London, to this particular hall with that tradition is just wonderful.' And that tradition must surely take on an even greater depth of meaning when you've studied under Mstislav Rostropovich – whose searing account of the Dvořák at the 1968 Proms, under the shadow of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, would be many people's candidate for the greatest performance in Proms history. There's no skirting that topic, either.

'I followed Rostropovich for a year when I was 17,' recalls Müller-Schott. 'It was a really astonishing, enormous experience, and yes, I was overwhelmed by the sheer energy and power and experience that he had – the way he was really burning for the music, 24 hours a day. And to witness that, and to get inspired by it, was actually an experience that I still really feel today. I learned so much in those lessons that I had with him. He'd mention some simple detail, and he'd then demonstrate it so convincingly in his playing that I'm still inspired by it. For example, the bow on the string always needs to have that incredibly close contact, to keep the intensity – especially with Russian repertoire.'

Ah yes, Russian repertoire – and with that gentlest of prompts, we return to the matter in hand. Tchaikovsky's *Rococo* Variations are the centrepiece of the new disc. But the rest of the programme is much less familiar, and somehow, you feel, slightly more Daniel Müller-Schott. If any two words could define his discography, they'd be collaboration and exploration. His recording career has

ranged from the cello concertos of Joachim Raff to a collection of 18th-century concertos for different instruments (some startlingly improbable, though we'll return to that later), transcribed by Müller-Schott himself. Müller-Schott has never been afraid to follow where his musical curiosity leads him. It's one reason, perhaps, why even 26 years after he won the Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow at the age of 15, his artistry still comes across as so fresh, so inquiring – in a word, so youthful.

As well as Glazunov's toothsome *Two Pieces* Op 20 and the melancholy *Chant du ménestrel*, the new disc includes Müller-Schott's own cello transcription of Tchaikovsky's mini violin concerto *Souvenir d'un lieu cher*, in Glazunov's orchestration. A neat connection. 'Actually, that was my inspiration for the recording,' he agrees. 'That connection – Glazunov, Tchaikovsky – they were such good friends, sending

each other their new sketches of music, and asking the other's opinion. I found that relationship very inspiring. I'd always loved those violin pieces by Tchaikovsky, so I studied Glazunov's

arrangement for violin and orchestra. And then I felt, OK, this is something – maybe it would work really well on the cello.'

Indeed – why wouldn't it? The Glazunov miniatures are something of a cherished secret among cellists, but they've been part of Müller-Schott's musical life since his triumph in Moscow, back in the early 1990s. 'Glazunov was obviously a very good cellist himself, playing in a quartet and probably playing his own pieces many times. The Dvořák concerto hadn't been written at that time, of course, so these salon pieces played a very important role in establishing the cello as a solo instrument – they tend to be more and more expressive, more virtuosic, more demanding of the instrument. I feel that tradition in Shostakovich. You have on the surface a simple melody but it has great darkness and depth underneath. And this came from those composers like Tchaikovsky and Glazunov.'

Still, one feature of the disc might surprise aficionados of the Russian cello. Müller-Schott has recorded the *Rococo* Variations in the familiar but heavily rewritten version by the work's dedicatee, Wilhelm Fitzenhagen. Rostropovich did the same (Fitzenhagen's cuts, frills and re-jiggings have become part of the Russian tradition in their own right), but it's surprising, at first, to find a cellist as thoughtful as Müller-Schott simply copying his teacher. It turns out that it's not quite as simple as

'I followed Rostropovich for a year. He'd mention a simple detail, then demonstrate it so convincingly – I'm still inspired by it'

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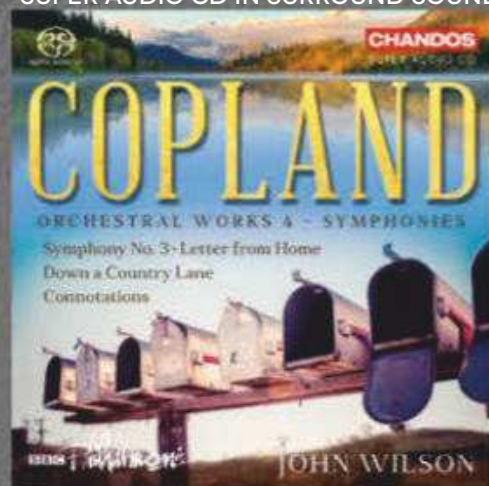
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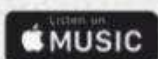
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STAY IN THE KNOW





Liberatingly different from the day job: the cellist is an active part of a Munich-based street art collective

that – and that Rostropovich wasn't his only guide to this music. 'The original version is very elegant, and I've loved that too, ever since I studied with Steven Isserlis. Steven always plays the original, and he always wanted to convince me to play it, but in concert and on disc I've chosen the Fitzenhagen. In the end Tchaikovsky accepted that version, and Fitzenhagen obviously was a great ambassador for his music. I think, ultimately, that musicians today are free to decide which version to play.'

'Chamber music is the most intimate form of communication, musically. I get great inspiration from different points of view'

Of course, this is coming from an artist whose urge to explore new musical territory has turned him into an indefatigable transcriber and rearranger. We've already touched on that Tchaikovsky transcription. Violin to cello is a natural transformation, but what on earth prompted Müller-Schott to transcribe Mozart's D major Flute Concerto? Could any instrument be further from the sonority of a cello? He smiles. 'I was just envying so much my musician friends and colleagues who can play Mozart violin concertos, flute concertos and piano concertos, and it's a really sad fact that Mozart hasn't left anything for the cello. Then I read that George Szell made a cello transcription of that very concerto for Emanuel Feuermann. Of course he did it in a very Romantic way – I think it was in the 1930s. I feel that if you do a transcription, you have

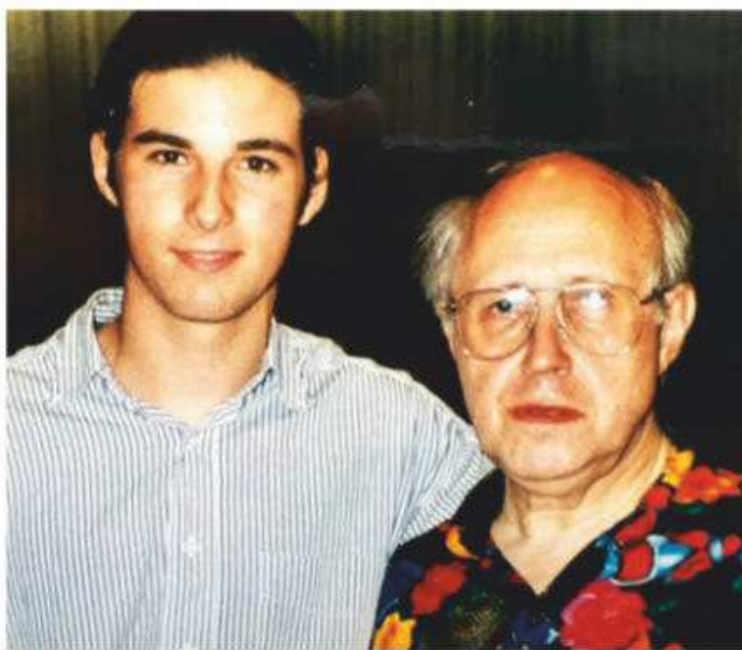
to get as close as possible to the intention of the composer, so I thought I'd try it.'

And why shouldn't a musician of such sensitivity and curiosity get his chance to play a Mozart concerto? For Müller-Schott, you sense, there's no such thing as an incorruptible Urtext. All music-making is about the interaction of personalities, whether Szell and Mozart, Tchaikovsky and Fitzenhagen, or Müller-Schott and his own great mentors – Rostropovich, Isserlis or the late Heinrich Schiff ('Music really was the centre of his entire being,' he remembers). Or, for that matter, his extended musical family of chamber-music collaborators, a list of friends and kindred spirits that includes the violinists Julia Fischer and Anne-Sophie Mutter, and the pianists Angela Hewitt and Francesco Piemontesi, with whom he has recorded the Shostakovich and Prokofiev sonatas for Orfeo and is shortly to release the two Brahms cello sonatas coupled, characteristically, with a cello transcription of the D major Violin Sonata.

He agrees: 'I feel that chamber music is really the most intimate form of communication, musically. I get great inspiration from different points of view, because we are all meeting in music at a certain time of our life. And when you hear another story and you connect to that, even if it's different, you might be inspired to maybe reconsider what you think is right. I mean, just now I was at the Schleswig-Holstein Festival, working on some details of the Beethoven sonatas with the composer and pianist Kit Armstrong, and he had a completely different view of a certain passage. I just listened: he had an overview of the whole structure of the composition. That's another element that I think is very important: openness.'

That openness informs Müller-Schott's work away from the concert platform. Even before the recent birth of his first child, he was deeply committed to 'Rhapsody in School' – an education project that has taken him into schools across Germany, the US and the Far East, with the intention of forging a connection with students who might never have encountered a real, living classical musician. 'They are so curious. They want to know about the cello and they ask wonderful questions. I might play some Bach suites, something traditional, then maybe Britten. Then I always ask if there are kids who already play an instrument, and if we can play something together. Immediately there's a connection – we're all musicians together. It becomes a very cool thing to do.'

For Müller-Schott, human stories like these are at the heart of his life as an artist. He clearly loves to retell the biography of his 1727 Matteo Goffriller cello, whose former owner, the veteran American cellist Harvey Shapiro, heard a radio broadcast of Müller-Schott playing at Lincoln Center and summoned him to his New York apartment. 'He was incredible,' he recalls.



A young Müller-Schott with his inspirational mentor, Rostropovich



From concertos to chamber music, Müller-Schott is always striking off in new directions; he sees any collaboration as another step towards becoming 'a complete artist'

'There he was, sitting in this huge armchair smoking cigars and drinking scotch. He was 93 years old, I think, by that time, and he'd played under Toscanini in the NBC Symphony. He'd picked this particular cello because he felt that this was the most characterful and easy to play, and he kept it for all his life.'

And in its own way, the Goffriller has become another musical collaborator. 'At first, its sound was very intense –

boiling, even – but now it has somehow acquired more silky and shiny qualities. You know, these old Italian instruments ... When you don't play it for a week, the cello is really upset.'

He laughs. 'It doesn't want to sound, and then you really have to almost convince it to come back to life again. But once it's ringing, then the instrument really gives something back to you.'


It's wholly characteristic that Müller-Schott senses a human personality in an inanimate object. He loves fine art (Caspar David Friedrich is a particular passion – 'that incredible breadth of colour and space, in which the individual somehow has to find themselves') and he's still extremely active in a street art (don't call it graffiti) collective, working together on walls in his home city of Munich and wherever its members are invited. It's liberatingly different from the day job.

'You're just starting from zero and you don't know what you will express,' he says. 'Some ideas actually come from the process of painting something. And that is a totally different experience.' But it will all come together when

'These old Italian instruments ... If I don't play the Goffriller for a while, it's upset. I have to convince it to come back to life'

Müller-Schott assumes artistic direction of the 2019 Spring Festival in Rügen – the Baltic island whose landscape, transfigured, appears in some of Friedrich's most striking canvases. That calls for a mural in its own right, and naturally a spirit of collaboration will drive the entire musical programme. 'We've got Simon Trpčeski and the Armida Quartet; and I've invited some cellist friends who do extremely different things.

I'll probably play some Bach, Brahms and Beethoven, and then we'll all get together and improvise, like a cello jam session. It should be a good time.'

First, though, tonight's Prom – and then some R&R back home in Munich, where Müller-Schott appreciates the relatively sedate pace of life with his wife, a fellow cellist, and their baby daughter. 'My holy month, August, is coming up – I'm so happy not to have to live out of a suitcase for a few weeks.' But it's surely no coincidence that a forthcoming Orfeo disc includes the Cello Sonata and (of course) some new song transcriptions by Munich's favourite son, Richard Strauss. Müller-Schott doesn't seem the kind of musician who will ever fall into a routine – his creativity is the sort that thrives on any new encounter or experience. Müller-Schott's career is less about being a great cellist than the lifelong, collaborative process of becoming a complete artist.  Müller-Schott's new recording on Orfeo, 'Trip to Russia', with the Deutsches-Symphonie-Orchester Berlin and Aziz Shokhakov, is released on November 9 and will be reviewed in our next issue



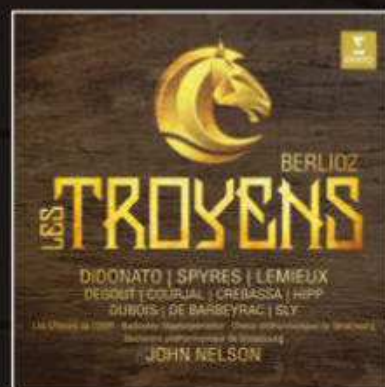
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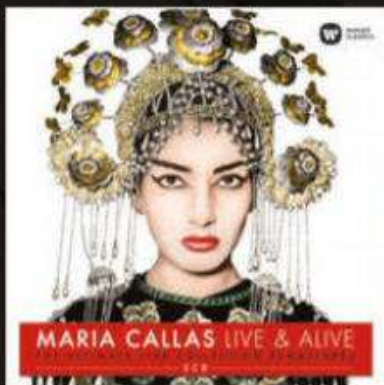
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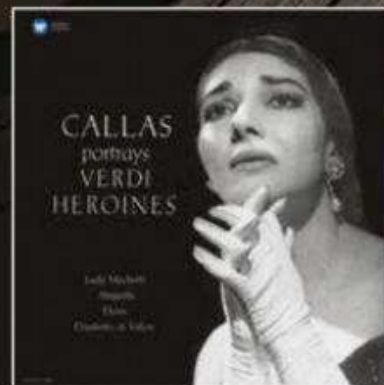
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RECORDING OF THE MONTH

Rob Cowan celebrates Hilary Hahn's triumphant return to solo Bach, completing the cycle of Sonatas and Partitas for violin after a gap of 20 years



JS Bach

Solo Violin Sonatas – No 1, BWV1001;
No 2, BWV1003. Solo Violin Partita No 1, BWV1002

Hilary Hahn *vn*

Decca Ⓢ 483 3954DH; Ⓢ ② ● 483 4181DH2
(76' • DDD)

For all the appreciable virtues offered by recent contenders in the Bach Sonatas and Partitas field, I cannot think of a single performer who begins to compare with Hilary Hahn. This is quite simply magnificent violin-playing, the sort that while you're listening to it convinces you that the music couldn't possibly be played any other way. One only need sample the elevated flight of the A minor Sonata's opening Grave, playing that combines candid expression with expertly judged pacing, to confirm the extent of Hahn's achievement. The fugues of both the A minor and G minor Sonatas abound in such ploys as 'statement and echo', variegated attack, carefully placed diminuendos and crescendos, a warming legato and chords that are strong without resorting to textural coarseness. Compare the first minute or so of the A minor Fugue with the Fugue from the C major Sonata included on Hahn's first solo Bach album (Sony, 2/98 – which features the other half of the solo cycle) and you soon realise just how far she's come since her teenage years, the tempo marginally more mobile and the variety of nuance and tone on offer so much wider than it had been.

And what about the A minor Sonata's gently pulsing Andante? To call this playing miraculous might seem like hyperbolic overkill, until you actually hear it for yourself. Not since Heifetz, whose approach is similarly vocal, have I heard such eloquent reportage of this heavenly music, Hahn keeping the



'The opening Grave, with candid expression and expertly judged pacing, confirms the extent of Hahn's achievement'



Hilary Hahn brings a deep expression and variety of nuance to Bach

gently palpitating accompaniment audibly supportive of the top line, her sound consistently warm, her tone rich but never overbearing, the general mood solemnly imploring. Come the midway point (at around 2'46") and she cues a brief pause for breath, which in turn allows us room for thought. Indeed, I would cite this track in particular (track 15) as an appropriate sampling point for anyone who normally finds Bach's solo violin music a bit of a slog to listen to, the sound and approach are so utterly seductive.

The opening of the G minor Sonata's Adagio is uncommonly broad, the ensuing monologue full of light and shade, the first four notes of the fugue that follows built on a subtle crescendo. As with the A minor Sonata's Fugue, Hahn makes expressive capital out of Bach's arpeggiated writing (which at 2'03" excitedly takes flight)

with never a hint of ugliness. The B minor Partita is no less beautiful, the Allemande morphing into its 'double' on an even keel, Hahn here employing finely spun vibrato. All this made me wish that she'd now go back and re-record that first (Sony) programme so that we could have all six solo works captured in what is surely her prime. The actual recording process was interesting in that Hahn started working on the new album some six years ago. She then shelved what she had done and went back to the project five years later, so what we have here was recorded between June 2012 and June 2017, the majority from the latest sessions. All this is typical of Hahn's almost Gouldian approach to recording, and the results are spectacular.

As to digital comparisons (and apologies in advance for the seemingly unavoidable gender bias)



Magnificent violin-playing: Hilary Hahn convinces you while listening to the music that it could not go any other way

there will be those who favour the ascetic tone and more demonstrable flexibility of, say, Alina Ibragimova (Hyperion, 11/09); or Julia Fischer (Pentatone, 6/05), an imaginative player who steers a course somewhere between Hahn and Ibragimova; or Rachel Podger (Channel Classics, 7/99, 12/99) whose cool, limpid handling of the music also works well. Collectors who prefer this period-savvy approach are therefore very well served. As ever, the 'problem' of period performance versus post-Romantic interpretation will open a critical chasm. It always does. But I cannot pose as a fraud just because my tastes, and the tastes of various others, happen to run counter to current trends in Bach scholarship. As Nicholas Kenyon meaningfully asked in our October issue,

what did Bach sound like in his day? More to the point, in this particular context, would hearing Hilary Hahn's performing gifts have dazzled him with new-found expressive potential for an instrument that he loved and played himself? What would his violin music have sounded like thereafter? We could speculate endlessly but I rather suspect that he would have loved what he heard and acted accordingly. Maybe it's a generational thing; but, speaking personally, Hahn touches my heart in a way that the players quoted above don't, so while scribbling this 'rave' review (which it undoubtedly is) I can at least acquit myself with a good conscience. You should by now know whether or not this CD is for you. I adored it. **G**

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Editor's Choice

Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings reviewed in this issue

Orchestral



Jeremy Nicholas listens to Daniil Trifonov's Rachmaninov:

'Trifonov is a gifted pianist, the Philadelphians have this music in their blood and Nézet-Séguin has an eye for detail' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 44**



Andrew Farach-Colton on Americana from Baiba Skride:

'It's absolutely gripping as well as plain gorgeous, her glistening tone reflecting the glitter of the percussion' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 48**

JS Bach

Six Brandenburg Concertos, BWV1046-1051.

Orchestral Suite No 2, BWV1067

Zefiro / Alfredo Bernardini *ob*

Arcana ⑤ ② A452 (112' • DDD)



Anyone miffed that Zefiro's recent Bach Orchestral Suites (4/17) didn't contain

the famous B minor work for flute and strings will doubtless be even more irritated to find that now that it has arrived, it has come coupled with all the *Brandenburg Concertos*. Well all right, perhaps they won't. In fact, they ought to be delighted that Alfredo Bernardini's ebullient ensemble has so quickly followed that well-thought-of release with similarly joyous recordings of these great masterpieces of Baroque orchestral music.

What makes them so joyous is the sense that the players have come together in music they surely know backwards and emerged with a thoroughly spontaneous-sounding expression of their own personalities and collective enjoyment. Bernardini is in charge, of course, and presumably lies behind many of the interpretative decisions concerning tempos, balance and the timing of important moments. Yet none of these is the attention-grabbing sort designed to advertise his presence. Some movements (mainly in Concertos Nos 1 and 2) may seem a little fast, though hardly as quick as certain rivals; and others may seem a little slow, but again not much. Most impressive is how Bernardini shapes paragraphs with intensifying crescendos, draws lines out of the contrapuntal dialogues that are not always heard (helped here by a clear and present recording), finds a different but always convincing way to end each movement, or surprises and delights at corners such as at 2'44" in the first movement of No 5, when he slows the music momentarily to set up a change of atmosphere as it slips into F sharp minor.

He has much to say, then, and clearly inspires much energy in his players.

The abiding impression, however, is that his talented soloists have been allowed to find their own answers and truly express themselves as individuals. It shows itself in the relish with which Cecilia Bernardini tugs expansively at the tempo and boldly spreads the violin chords in the outer movements of No 4, how the violas poke at each other in the canonic first movement of No 6, the freedom (but also good taste) with which so many of the players ornament their lines, or perhaps best of all how Francesco Corti turns the mad harpsichord solo of No 5 from knitting-machine music into something flexible and human, and then charmingly allows the exuberance to spill over into his continuo-playing in the next ritornello. Such delights as these are also to be encountered in the Orchestral Suite, which benefits from firm playing by flute soloist Marcello Gatti and some well-chosen tempos, including a not-too-slow Rondeaux and a not-too-fast Badinerie.

It has to be said that the sheer enthusiasm of the playing on this disc leads at times to a bit of murky ensemble and maybe a little coarseness of sound, but really it is all too much fun to be worrying about that. **Lindsay Kemp**

Beethoven • Chopin

Beethoven Piano Concerto No 4, Op 58^a Chopin Ballade No 4, Op 52. Piano Sonata No 2, Op 35

Eric Lu *pf*^a Hallé Orchestra / Edward Gardner

Warner Classics ⑤ 9029 55521-5 (74' • DDD)



In the world of the rebooted Leeds Piano Competition the prize means management and a recording contract. And while many things about the new-look competition are encouraging (a chamber music round, for instance, or the greater emphasis on education), this does thrust the winner into the harshest of spotlights.

Eric Lu is, at 20, used to winning competition prizes, most notably having come fourth at the 2015 Chopin Competition. It's important to remember that, competition or no, he's still a student at the Curtis and therefore can't be expected to be the finished item. And therein lies the contradiction, for this is a commercial recording, of heavily recorded repertoire.

I have enormous respect for anyone choosing to play Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto in a competition, for there is surely no more challenging opening in the concerto repertoire. Lu makes something of a meal of those solo opening bars, applying (to my mind) too much rubato; Edward Gardner, directing the Hallé (on terrific form), does what any fine concerto conductor would do: he imitates the phrasing of Lu, though there is something of an acceleration through the next *tutti* to bring things up to speed. This is a reading that is full of glinting brilliance on the part of Lu – his dexterity is impressive, as is his trilling, and in the more extrovert moments he is in his element. Yet in the more inward moments, while Lu takes the dynamics down, he doesn't soften emotionally or display much colouristic range (just sample the opening movement at 6'41" or the switch to the minor at 7'39"). Again, the first-movement cadenza is confident but a tad unyielding.

In the *Andante con moto* there's little sense of change as the movement progresses and the piano-writing becomes more worked up. The finale fares better, again with some truly characterful playing from the Hallé, but, while technically on the money, Lu doesn't convey the breadth of expression that you find in more memorable performances.

The remainder of the disc is devoted to Chopin, with the Fourth Ballade from the second round and the Second Sonata from the semi-final. I could have done with a more haloed sound in the opening of the Ballade and at times Lu's habit of applying rubato in both hands loses the essential element of classicism in Chopin's writing.



Spontaneous-sounding expression of collective enjoyment: Zefiro play Bach's Brandenburg Concertos with joyous enthusiasm

The sonata seems to me still a work in progress: in the first movement he has a tendency to pull the tempo around too much (the first movement from 5'40", for instance), the points of repose not really offering stillness. The Scherzo's outer sections are oddly unstable – though the *Più lento* works better – and the Funeral March itself lacks a grandeur, a solemnity, as if Lu is slightly uncomfortable at his relatively slow speed. The finale, though misty, doesn't convey the required ethereal quality.

The disc left me wondering who Eric Lu is, musically speaking. I'm not sure his personality really comes through as yet; and if that seems a high expectation from a 20-year-old, therein lies the eternal conundrum of competitions. **Harriet Smith**

Berg · Mendelssohn · Schleiermacher

Berg Violin Concerto^a Mendelssohn Symphony No 3, 'Scottish', Op 56 Schleiermacher Relief

^aBaiba Skride *vn*

Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra / Andris Nelsons

Accentus (DVD ACC20443; Blu-ray ACC10443) (93' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS-HD MA5.1, DTS5.1, DD5.1 & PCM stereo • O)

Recorded live, February 22 & 23, 2018



was officially inaugurated by this concert. Smiles all round, even while playing, suggest that the Leipzig players are at least happy to have a safe pair of hands in charge. Reports from Birmingham, Boston and London, where he has led dynamic and much-praised productions of Wagner and Strauss for the Royal Opera, indicate that orchestral musicians accord to Nelsons both a trust and respect not granted to many of his colleagues.

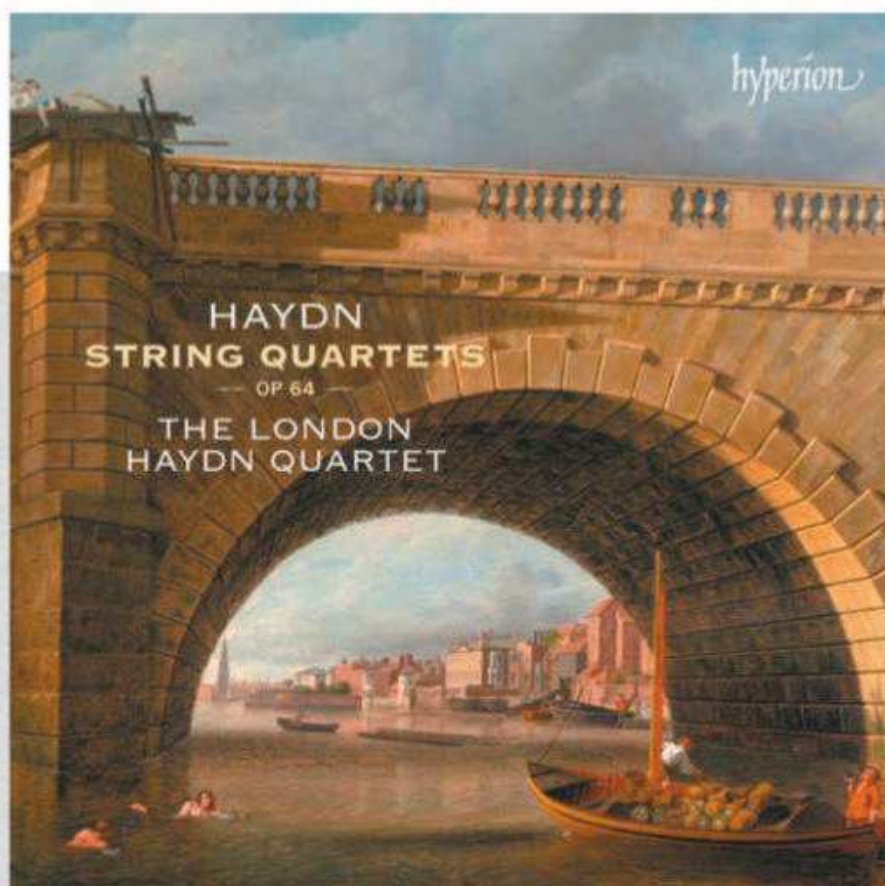
Head buried in the score, Nelsons nonetheless holds a firm grip on the relentless motor rhythms powering the event's premiere, commissioned from Steffen Schleiermacher. The title of *Relief* suggests sculptural analogies, yet the work is made more of metal than wood or stone, hammered into place, and it may not be entirely mischievous to suggest that Schleiermacher was playing on the word's double meaning with an all-too-brief solo for alto saxophone and coolly shimmering

central nocturne introduced by the trumpet – a tribute, perhaps, to Nelsons's own orchestral background.

Having already written several commissions for the Gewandhaus, Leipzig-based Schleiermacher (more familiar to record-buyers as a pianist with an MDG catalogue majoring in Cage and Satie) was a fairly conservative choice of composer, and there are signs elsewhere in the concert that Nelsons will seek to conserve rather than renew the heritage of an orchestra that takes its history seriously. His fellow Latvian and frequent stage-partner Baiba Skride was engaged for the Violin Concerto of Berg; conductor and soloist work harmoniously together in presenting it as a largely serene journey away from earthly troubles. Skride gives a requiescal sort of performance of unruffled poise, without an ugly note in it, lit from behind by telling but subdued orchestral detail. In admittedly unrepeatable circumstances, Isabelle Faust digs far deeper into the score – still partnered by Nelsons – at the memorial concert for Claudio Abbado, issued on film by Accentus.

There follows the kind of *Scottish* Symphony that the Gewandhaus could have given at any time in the past half-century – were it not for the fact that all

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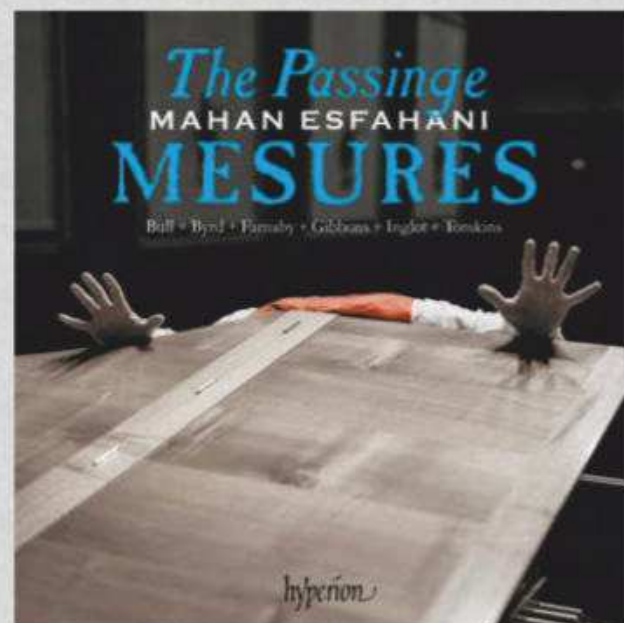
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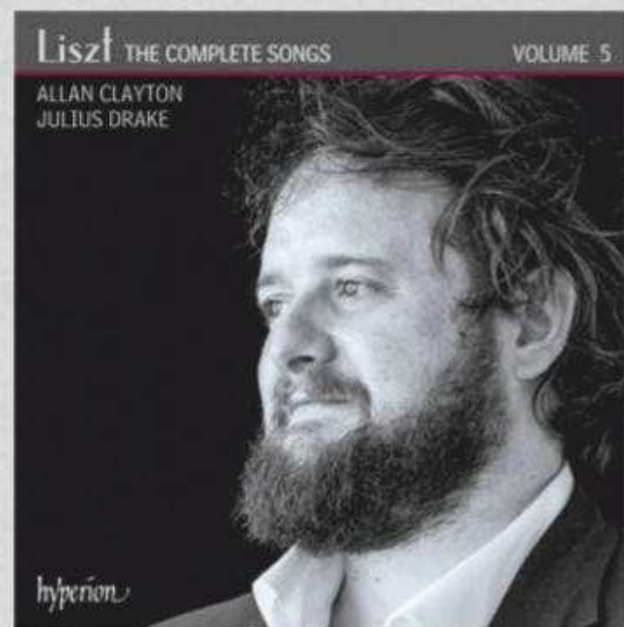
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of Nelsons's recent predecessors as Kapellmeister have taken a more mobile, pulse-driven approach to music that admits only the subtlest handling of rubato. This is #ThrowbackThursday Mendelssohn. The main *Allegro* opens with a stagily impressive *pianissimo* at crotchet=75, way below the composer's indicated mark of 100. Even Bernstein in New York wasn't that slow – and at an identically broad tempo in the *Adagio*, Bernstein accesses realms of pathos that are foreign to Nelsons and his cultivation of an aristocratically reserved line. The Gewandhaus players often cover themselves in glory – especially a nobly sonorous brass section – and, if nothing else, show themselves adaptable to the changing winds of taste in music that they can doubtless play with their eyes shut. **Peter Quantrill**

Brahms • Schubert

Brahms Serenade No 2, Op 16

Schubert Symphony No 5, D485

Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique / Sir John Eliot Gardiner

Soli Deo Gloria © SDG729 (60' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, November 19, 2016



With an economy of means that would serve him well in years to come, the 26-year-old Brahms wrote a single, open-fifth viola chord to lead back into the exposition repeat of the A major Serenade's first movement. On Mario Venzago's new recording (Sony, 10/18) it's almost inaudible, an apology of a transition. Riccardo Chailly treats it briskly as a means to an end. Not John Eliot Gardiner, who plants the chord (at 2'36") in Brahmsian soil and lets it ripen as a provisional answer to the bassoons' harmonic question. Hanging in the Concertgebouw acoustic with a gentle, ruddy glow of pure tone, it yields a moment of taking stock before engaging once more with the movement's chief and cheerful business.

A tiny point, perhaps, but one that attests to the care and affection illuminating every bar of the performance. For a more germane comparison I went back half a century, to one of the DG albums that brought Claudio Abbado's name to the record-buying public. Almost identically balanced and paced, Gardiner brings a more rustic swagger to the Scherzo and more wind-blown chuff to horn and string accents. Under Abbado, the Berlin Philharmonic get into a tangle with

Brahms's compulsive hemiola hovering in the *Adagio*; again, space and time and dabs of portamento work wonders for Gardiner, though the intonation at 3'33" is really too close for comfort. There's a glorious, keening quality to the movement's central clarinet solo, played by Timothy Lines, and both clarinets lead the way in an unusual, smoochy account of the Minuet where Gardiner makes up for lost time.

In matters of colour and timing, the playing of this early-Romantic repertoire has undergone its own revolution in the past 30 years. Under Goodman and Mackerras, even Minkowski, the Minuet of Schubert's Fifth is neat but plain by comparison with Gardiner. Every phrase of the *Andante* is weighted and cherished. For its combination of tenderness, gravity and springtime joys, the performance may be set alongside Klemperer's Philharmonia (with a first flute, Marlen Root, who has nothing to fear by comparison with Gareth Morris). The conclusion is quickly faded, but applause is retained after the Brahms. It's a disc of pure delight.

Peter Quantrill

Brahms – selected comparison:

BPO, Abbado (5/83^R) (DG) 477 5424GT A2

Schubert – selected comparison:

Philh Orch, Klemperer (EMI/WARN) 404309-2

Dove

A Brief History of Creation^a. Gaia Theory^b

^aHallé Children's Choir & Orchestra / Sir Mark Elder; ^bBBC Symphony Orchestra / Josep Pons NMC © NMCD233 (70' • DDD • T)

Recorded live at the ^bRoyal Albert Hall, London, July 28, 2014; ^aBridgewater Hall, Manchester, June 19, 2016



Master of musical pragmatism, Jonathan Dove is also capable of thinking on a large scale – hence his settings of wartime poetry in *For an Unknown Soldier* (Signum, 2/17) – and *A Brief History of Creation* (2016) marries accessibility with ambition to an effective degree.

Across 47 minutes the listener is whisked through a potted (though scientifically up-to-date) history of evolution from the emergence of stars, via formation of the earth and atmosphere; then to fish and plants, birds, mammals and, finally, man. The writing for children's choir – with judicious use of solo voices – is simple without being facile (one wonders what Britten or David Bedford might have made of the challenge), the orchestra adding context through shades of onomatopoeia

always geared to Alasdair Middleton's text. Highlights include the shimmering evocation of 'Ocean', diaphanous harmony of 'Trees' and incisive response as 'Whales Return to the Sea'. Unfortunate that the longest section, 'Dinosaurs', is the weakest – with its crass allusions to Prokofiev and Stravinsky – but as the work reaches its pointedly understated apotheosis with 'Man', the sensation of a journey experienced feels undeniable.

As a coupling, *Gaia Theory* (2014) could not be more appropriate. James Lovelock's concept of the earth as a self-regulatory organism facilitating life is the ideal basis for this high-octane 'concerto for orchestra' affording full vent to Dove's post-minimalist urgings. Performances of both works could hardly be bettered, nor the wide-ranging sound accorded these premieres; and though the booklet note is essentially a press release, its enthusiasm cannot be gainsaid.

Richard Whitehouse

Elgar

'Short Orchestral Works'

Air de ballet. Three Bavarian Dances, Op 27.

Three Characteristic Pieces, Op 10. Canto popolare. Carissima. Chanson de matin, Op 15

No 2. Chanson de nuit, Op 15 No 1. Falstaff,

Op 68^a – Two Interludes. May-Song. Mina.

Minuet, Op 21. Pleading, Op 48^a. Rosemary. Salut d'amour, Op 12. Sérénade lyrique – Mélodie.

Sevillaña, Op 7

^aCharles Mutter ^{vn}

BBC Concert Orchestra / David Lloyd-Jones

Dutton Epoch © CDLX7354

(81' • DDD/DSD)



Two of the last century's greatest symphonists, though disparately placed in so many respects, had one thing in common: both Sibelius and Elgar were accomplished miniaturists. This particular Elgar programme is interesting in that it includes two premiere recordings. The first, which opens the disc, is the composer's earliest known orchestral work, *Air de ballet*, a jaunty little number imaginatively orchestrated, not least because of its unexpected employment of a euphonium. Elgar's first published work for orchestra, *Sevillaña*, is gently prophetic of later pieces and like everything else on the programme benefits from the happy collaboration of the BBC Concert Orchestra under David Lloyd-Jones and Dutton's superb recording. Concerning the *Three Characteristic Pieces*, Op 10, the brief

introduction to the Gavotte is another recording premiere.

The first recording of *Mina* was made just over a week before Elgar's death – he had heard a test pressing at his bedside, found the performance too fast and asked for it not to be issued. Lloyd-Jones's reading is not only affectionate but considerably less hurried than its shellac predecessor. I'm sure Elgar would have loved it. Among other inclusions are Elgar's own arrangement of the *Canto popolare* from *In the South* for small orchestra, the *Three Bavarian Dances*, *Chanson de nuit* and *Chanson de matin*, and other short pieces including *Pleading*, where the solo violinist, Charles Mutter, nails the style of the day with just the right balance of restraint and expressive eloquence.

Mutter also turns up on the first of the two 'interludes' from *Falstaff*, which, alas for those who are unable to locate an SACD player, are accessible only via the Super Audio facility on the CD. Not being an expert in these matters, I'm wondering whether a total disc timing of 81'25" meant that the *Falstaff* extracts could in fact have been included as part of the standard CD format. CDs with that sort of playing time are hardly rare these days (Daniel Harding's Bavarian RSO Mahler Sixth runs to 82'28") but maybe Michael Dutton, being the technical whizz he is as well as a seasoned CD manufacturer, has had bad experiences of CDs with long playing times. Still, if you buy this disc (which I happily recommend) and keep glancing longingly at the final two tracks wondering whether they're as good as the rest, I'm afraid I have to assure you – they are!

Rob Cowan

Fox

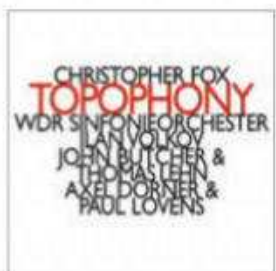
Topophony (three recordings)^{a/b/c}

^aAlex Dörner *tpt* ^aPaul Lovens *drums*

^cJohn Butcher *sax* ^bThomas Lehn *synth*

^{abc}WDR Symphony Orchestra / Ilan Volkov

hat[now]ART © HATNOWART211 (69' • DDD)



Calling a composition *Topophony* might suggest an emphasis on musical

mathematics and acoustics. But the full title, '*Topophony* for orchestra, with or without improvising soloists', promises an experience that proves to be far from austere or abstract. Christopher Fox (b1955) is skilled at using systematic processes flexibly, to overtly expressive ends. His music establishes textures that convey emotion through materials that

are not obviously traditional – there is little sign of accompanied melodies or of phrases that are drawn to regular points of cadence and resolution. Yet Fox's suggestion that *Topophony* resembles a landscape is a clue that the music's meditative aura can be heard in ways comparable to very different British or Scandinavian works that also evoke cool, increasingly melancholy pastoral vistas: for example, Sibelius's *Tapiola* or Holst's *Egdon Heath*. Drifting counterpoints of sustained pitches form steadily shifting chords notable for their pull towards consonant intervals, and draw the listener in through very simple expressive nuances – slow swellings and fadings, occasional trills or tremolos, stuttering clusters of pizzicatos.

These elements are heard at their purest in the orchestra-only version of *Topophony* – track 2 on this disc. Framing it are two other versions in which pairs of improvisers are placed within the orchestra, not at the front in traditional concerto mode. Fox leaves them free to react to what they hear as the performance unfolds, and although none of them adopts a consistently anarchic, oppositional stance, their actions turn the meditation into a drama with a strong sense of ritual, intensifying the atmosphere created by the orchestra and also challenging it with initiatives that are the more striking for their relative brevity.

It's a safe bet that the single harp-playing improviser at *Topophony*'s first performance in 2015 would have had a different relationship to the orchestra than the bolder-sounding trumpet and saxophone, with percussion and synthesiser support respectively, used in these recordings. But microphone placements help to ensure that the listener also has the sense of being among rather than separate from the players. No less important is the fact that the musical results, in performances of exemplary concentration, are absorbing enough to pre-empt the inevitable question – why listen to something involving improvisation more than once?

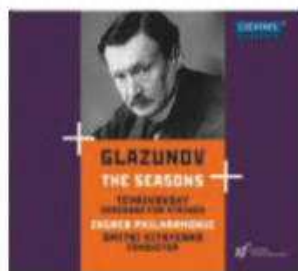
Arnold Whittall

Glazunov • Tchaikovsky

Glazunov *The Seasons*, Op 67

Tchaikovsky *Serenade for Strings*, Op 48

Zagreb Philharmonic Orchestra / Dmitri Kitaenko
Oehms © OC1889 (75' • DDD)



It's hard to imagine any new recording of Glazunov's *The Seasons* being

anything other than a pleasure. It's not that *The Seasons* is under-recorded, just that it's one of those pieces that grows in stature the more frequently you hear it, and I genuinely tried quite hard to enjoy this new recording from Dmitri Kitaenko and the Zagreb Philharmonic.

Kitaenko places the opening chords of 'Winter' with great deliberation, and they demonstrate one of this disc's best qualities: the depth and warmth of the bass sound. It's imposing, and the suggestion that Kitaenko is approaching the score as absolute music is reinforced by the expansive grandeur of his barcarolle in 'Summer' and the *Petit adage* in 'Autumn'.

All fine, as far as it goes. There's much to be gained by treating *The Seasons* as (to borrow Ravel's phrase) a choreographic symphony. But it's still a ballet, and many of Kitaenko's ponderous, sluggish tempos feel wholly undanceable. The final 'Bacchanale' lacks verve, the 'Waltz of the Cornflowers and Poppies' has hobnail boots, and the fine Zagreb wind principals sound audibly uncomfortable with Kitaenko's speeds in the 'Snow' variation (too slow) and the big clarinet solo in 'Summer' (too fast). I'll be sticking with Järvi and Svetlanov for now, both of whom also have brighter recorded sound.

The coupling – a beefy, symphonic account of Tchaikovsky's *Serenade for Strings* – owes very little to Tchaikovsky's avowed inspiration, Mozart. Tempos throughout are broad, and while the Zagreb strings do phrase together rather beautifully towards the end of the *Elegia*, the opening *Andante non troppo* is funereal. Of course, you might feel it's none the worse for that. You pay your money, you take your choice. **Richard Bratby**

Glazunov – selected comparisons:

Philh Orch, Svetlanov (9/78^R, 2/97)

(EMI/WARN) 678398-2 or 2435 69361-5

RSNO, N Järvi (3/89) (CHAN) CHAN8596

Haydn

'Concerti per Esterházy'

Violin Concertos^a – HobVIIa:1; HobVIIa:4.

Cello Concerto, HobVIIb:1^b

^bMarco Ceccato *VC*

Gli Incogniti / Amandine Beyer^{a/vn}

Harmonia Mundi © HMM90 2314 (58' • DDD)



Haydn's violin concertos do better on disc than in concert and period-instrument recordings appear surprisingly often. The C major and G major



Sakari Oramo and the Vienna Philharmonic explore the symphonies of Rued Langgaard – see review on page 40

Concertos bookend this programme and Amandine Beyer and Gli Incogniti take an earthy approach to them, treating them not as somewhat rhapsodic ‘early’ works but rather as if they possessed all the motivic tautness of the middle-period symphonies. For all the charms of the straighter readings by Aisslinn Nosky, recorded live with Harry Christophers and the Handel and Haydn Society, this is a more eventful, more thrilling listen. The tiny forces (just 10 string players) draw out a true chamber-like ambience in which the soloist is *primus inter pares*. Occasional finger noise from Beyer barely distracts but rather adds to a sense of adventure in both concertos.

The C major Cello Concerto, too, has led a charmed recorded life since its rediscovery and modern premiere a little over half a century ago, even if there are fewer period-instrument recordings. Soloist Marco Ceccato’s sound is deeper (and occasionally gruffer) than the more songful Jean-Guihen Queyras with the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra. Both gleefully launch into the irresistible opening movement and the fleet-footed finale; Queyras is meditative in the central *Adagio* where Ceccato is a touch more rhetorical.

The two soloists in these three works go for maximum characterisation and, in so doing, inspire their orchestral colleagues to provide something more than a simple accompaniment – a vital ingredient that makes this near-hour-long programme so pleasurable. The Poitiers theatre in which the recording was made provides a resonant acoustic but the engineering ensures the focus is on the soloist. In all three performances there is a fairly prominent harpsichord, which may be a deal-breaker for some, but otherwise this is a tasty cello sandwich.

David Thresher

Violin Concertos Nos 1 & 4 – selected comparisons:

Nosky, Handel & Haydn Society, Christophers

(11/13, 3/16) (CORO) COR16113, COR16139

Cello Concerto No 1 – selected comparison:

Queyras, Freiburg Baroque Orch, Müllejans

(10/04⁸) (HARM) HMG50 1816

Holst

‘Orchestral Works, Vol 4’

Indra, Op 13. Invocation, Op 19 No 2^a.

A Moorside Suite. Scherzo. Symphony

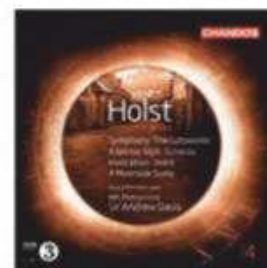
‘The Cotswolds’, Op 8. A Winter Idyll

^aGuy Johnston VC

BBC Philharmonic Orchestra /

Sir Andrew Davis

Chandos ©  CHSA5192 (77’ • DDD/DSD)



Initiated years ago by the late Richard Hickox and continued splendidly with Vol 3

by Andrew Davis (12/13), this latest instalment in the series of Holst’s complete orchestral works is an interesting collection of pieces from across his career. Beautifully performed by the BBC Philharmonic, Holst’s brilliant orchestral technique and imagination are expertly finessed by Davis who has, beyond any shadow of doubt, stepped into the shoes of Boult, Barbirolli, Handley, Braithwaite, Thomson and Hickox as a true champion of British music of the late 19th and 20th centuries. Listening to *A Winter Idyll* (1897), the *Cotswolds* Symphony (1899-1900) and *Indra* (1903), one is reminded of the fact that Holst, like Vaughan Williams, was a slow developer and that the hand of Romanticism, across a broad European spectrum, remained a potent feature of his music until just before the First World War.

A Winter Idyll gives us a taste of Holst the student still studying under Stanford. Accomplished in form and clear instrumentation, it reveals the 23-year-old

composer's susceptibilities to the current popularity of Dvořák, Tchaikovsky and Grieg. Late 19th-century influences are still significant features of the *Cotswolds* Symphony, Op 8 (though there are many indications of an emerging personality in the 'Elegy in memoriam William Morris' and the gossamer Scherzo), but while the Sanskrit-inspired symphonic poem *Indra*, Op 13, may still betray Holst's indebtedness to Wagner, there is much in this work that shows a new harmonic and technical boldness. The *Invocation*, Op 19 No 2 (1911), sensitively interpreted by Guy Johnston, belongs to that fascinating set of works including *The Cloud Messenger* (1910-12), the suite *Beni Mora* (1912) and the *St Paul's Suite* (1912-13) where, in response to early 20th-century modernism, the chemistry and vision of Holst's style and language were undergoing significant change.

It is a treat, too, to hear the string orchestration of *A Moorside Suite* (1928, in Colin Matthews's edition of 1994) which Holst intended for the girls at St Paul's, Hammersmith, which, I have to say, I prefer for all its clarity, crispness, sonority and timbre to the brass version. Proving too difficult for them, however, he composed the delightful *Brook Green Suite* in its place. The remaining work on this recording is the lean, neoclassical Scherzo (1933) Holst completed for a symphony he had been planning from 1932. Bearing all the hallmarks of that sinewy contrapuntal austerity of Holst's last works – such as *Egdon Heath* (1928), the *Choral Fantasia* (1930) and *Hammersmith* (1930-31) – it belongs to that more severe asceticism touched on in 'Saturn' and 'Neptune', and which Vaughan Williams was exploring in *Job* (1930) and his Fourth Symphony (1930-34). **Jeremy Dibble**

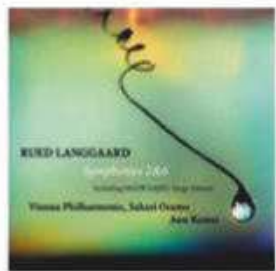
Langgaard · Gade

Gade Tango jalousie^a **Langgaard** Symphonies – No 2, 'Awakening of Spring'^b; No 6, 'The Heaven-Rending'. Unnoticed Morning Stars

^b**Anu Komsí** sop **Vienna Philharmonic**

Orchestra / Sakari Oramo ^{av}n

Dacapo ⑆ 6 220653 (71' • DDD/DSD)



The follow-up to their impressive showing in Per Nørgård's First and Eighth Symphonies (8/14) finds Sakari Oramo and the Vienna Philharmonic taking on two contrasted works by Rued Langgaard that illuminate this composer in all his stylistic diversity and recklessness.

Coming soon after his ambitious debut in this genre, Langgaard's Second Symphony (1914) is the most directly appealing of the cycle: an expansive though never unfocused study in a Romanticism centred on Schumann and Strauss. Such an idiom should be in this orchestra's blood and the VPO do not disappoint – whether in the lyrically effulgent initial movement, with its discreetly modified sonata form, or the lithe finale whose setting of Emil Rittershaus duly crystallises the music's essence and is eloquently rendered by Anu Komsí. Yet it is the central *Lento* that leaves the strongest impression – its paraphrases (rather than variations) on a Danish Christmastide hymn unfolding with rapt inwardness, before being thrown into relief by the unworldly quality of an interlude (6'42") which anticipates disquieting visions ahead.

Not least those to be found in the Sixth Symphony (1920), its apocalyptic imagery conveyed via Langgaard's most resourceful (rather than merely eccentric) design: a 'quasi una fantasia' whose five variations on the opening theme, presented in 'light' then 'dark' variants, cohere as a single-movement structure precisely because of the emotional tension generated. Oramo again gives expressive rhetoric its head more readily than the overt incisiveness favoured by Thomas Dausgaard, the monumental heft of Neeme Järvi or the tensile and rough-edged account from John Frandsen (currently in a two-disc set of pioneering performances that remains an excellent introduction to Langgaard). Nor does momentum falter going into the coda, where the forces of good and evil collide in a peroration more thrilling for its theatrical immediacy.

A mandatory purchase for its interpretative insights, committed playing and tangibly realistic sound. Dacapo adds the rapturous second movement from Langgaard's 14th Symphony and a suave tango as is also the most played Danish piece. Oramo tackles its solo part with aplomb. **Richard Whitehouse**

Symphony No 2 – selected comparison:

Dam-Jensen, Danish Nat SO, Dausgaard

(6/07) (DACA) 6 220516

Symphony No 6 – selected comparisons:

Danish Nat RSO, Frandsen

(12/94⁸) (DANA) DACOCD560

Danish Nat RSO, N Järvi (12/92) (CHAN) CHAN9064

Danish Nat SO, Dausgaard (9/01) (DACA) 8 224180

Mahler

Symphony No 3

Anna Larsson *contr* **Clara Schumann Youth Choir; Women's Choir of the Musikverein, Düsseldorf; Düsseldorf Symphony Orchestra / Adám Fischer**

AVI-Music ⑆ ② AVI8553399 (96' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Tonhalle Düsseldorf,

November 9-13, 2017



Eight unison horns dramatically announce Mahler's pantheistic hymn to the natural

world. And if the opening bars of Adám Fischer's refreshingly spontaneous account sounded a tad jaded to my ears it was almost certainly because I cannot easily hear those measures without recalling Leonard Bernstein's electrifying 1961 account – the very first of his New York cycle to be released and still the finest. One of the great Mahler performances.

Technology has moved on, of course, and the sound of this brand-new Düsseldorf cycle – so impressive in every instalment to date – is certainly an advance on the Bernstein, though not perhaps Manfred Honeck's sonically spectacular Pittsburgh account of this symphony on Exton or indeed Riccardo Chailly's Royal Concergebouw version on Decca. That said, the deep, growling recesses of Mahler's flabbergasting first movement are impressively chronicled as summer's jaunty march sweeps aside all the darker strains of shuddering string basses and dinosaural trombones with its raucously reedy winds and rattling percussion. Fischer makes something really outrageous of the Ivesian development section, culminating as it does in the passage affectionately dubbed 'The Rabble', but above all it's his 'improvisatory' way with phrasing and rubato which sounds so authentically Mahlerian and is time and again testament to the almost telepathic communication between this conductor and his players. He maximises the effect of the euphoric final pages of the first movement by opening up the big rhetorical moments and not sparing the horsepower in the frenetic closing *presto*.

Mahler's flora and fauna then come vividly alive in the inner movements, the 'flower' movement nuanced with real Viennese charm and the rampaging wildlife of the third movement whipped up in marked contrast to the magical offstage posthorn solos, where all nature seems simply to stop and listen. The soloist Frank Ludemann keeps those solos simple and true – and thus all the more moving.

Anna Larsson is truly the voice of wisdom and experience in the Nietzsche setting, the perfect colour, though Fischer adopts the now received wisdom that the oft-repeated rising semitone in oboe and cor anglais ('a sound of nature') should be

played (according to the instruction 'drawn upwards') as a glissando. I still think that had Mahler wanted a glissando he would have marked one as he did elsewhere in his scores (Bernstein, incidentally, would have none of it) – and my problem remains that this awkward effect draws so much attention to itself that you cease listening to anything else.

Fischer writes most eloquently in the booklet note about how his preference would instinctively be always to use gut strings in Mahler and specifically here in the great final *Adagio*, 'What Love Tells Me'. But even without them he achieves what he describes as a 'softness', a phrasal fluency that makes for a more personal, intimate feel. He did just this in the slow movement of his recent Fourth (1/18), eschewing the bigger Mahlerian sonority and protracted tempo for an expressivity that was entirely achieved in the phrasing and not the vibrato.

Perhaps, though, there is a price to be paid for this appreciable 'scaling down' of intent in this final movement. There is a cosmic dimension to this music, a culmination of everything that has gone before – and in that there is no question that only a Bernstein's breadth of vision ultimately leads you onwards and upwards towards the transcendental. **Edward Seckerson**

Selected comparisons:

NYPO, Bernstein (12/62⁸) (SONY) 88697 94333-2

RCO, Chailly (8/04) (DECC)

475 514-2DX2 or 475 6686DX12

Pittsburgh SO, Honeck (11/11) (EXTO) OVCL00450

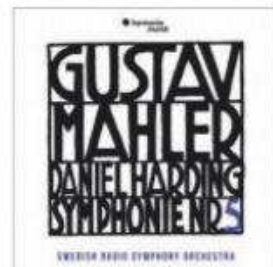
Mahler

Symphony No 5

Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra /

Daniel Harding

Harmonia Mundi (HMM90 2366 (73' • DDD)



Bells up; with the greatest vehemence; hurriedly, ie carelessly throughout. Mahler's

Fifth is peppered with such imprecations, as well as bewilderingly inconstant changes of metre and tempo, which is why the piece can feel like an assault course – 'too scherzoid', as one of m'learned colleagues once put it to me. Daniel Harding's strategy is not to duck the composer's frequent recourses to extremity but to meet them head-on.

The opening funeral march is fairly dug out of sullen black earth. Harding sets an audaciously broad pace and hangs on to it for grim death. There is playing here of the greatest vehemence (Mahler's marking for

the second movement) and, in the Scherzo, Mariana depths of trenchancy pock-marked by *col legno* and timpani thwacks that should give good subwoofers a run for their money. Rubato tweaks to the pulse take place under the bonnet; what this Fifth has in spades is *Schwung*. Set against similarly proportioned, wholehearted and otherwise impressive recent accounts, the Swedish Radio Symphony players offer more energy and colour than the Düsseldorfer Symphoniker for Adám Fischer, and they are blessed with far more vivid and immediate recorded sound than the surprisingly muddy engineering allotted to the Gürzenich Orchestra and François-Xavier Roth.

A pitch-perfect *Adagietto* is sung tenderly as if in the midst of love and not death, but with the space both to impart natural-sounding portamento to its phrases and to plant a broad caesura of respite and reflection amid the symphony's – and the performance's – neurotic and finally euphoric turns of mood. It takes a particular, colloquial intelligence of phrasing not to let the finale lapse into garrulous or portentous triviality; its (studio-recorded) brass-led apotheosis arrives here with the kind of authentically live, cumulative impact that demands a headlong dash for the tape. In a market

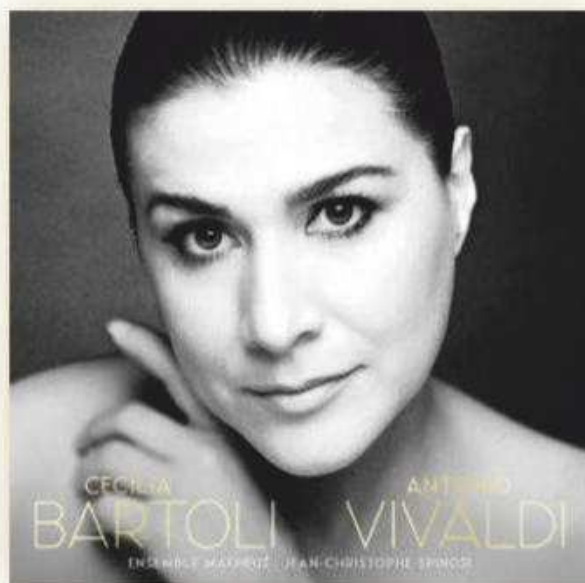


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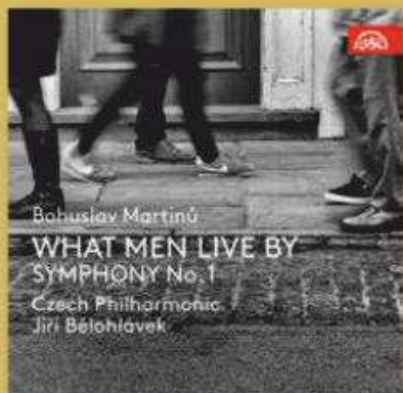
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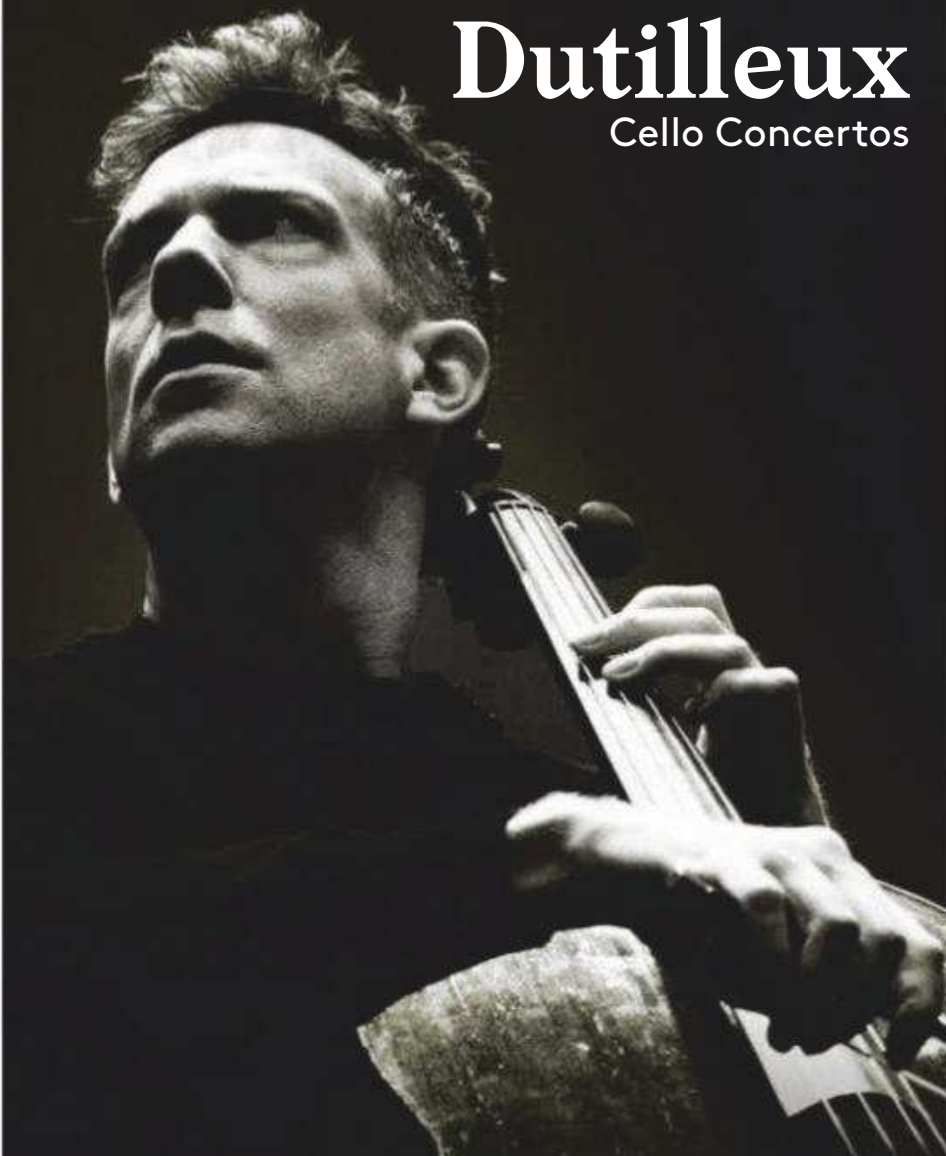
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where modern rivals sound pedestrian or perfumed with finesse by comparison, this Fifth raises high hopes for what the graphic cover artwork implies may become a complete cycle. **Peter Quantrill**

Nielsen • Prokofiev

Nielsen Violin Concerto

Prokofiev Violin Concerto No 1, Op 19

Liya Petrova *vn*

Odense Symphony Orchestra / Kristiina Poska

Orchid © ORC100086 (62' • DDD)



Liya Petrova and Jiyoon Lee shared first prize in the 2016 Carl Nielsen International

Violin Competition. Lee's terrific recording of the Nielsen Concerto was released earlier this year (Orchid Classics, A/18), and now we have Petrova's. Listening to them side by side, I understand why the judges could not choose one over the other, as they're pretty much equals in terms of technical finesse and emotional commitment. Lee's tone is bright, sweet and tightly focused; Petrova's has more muscle and sinew. The Bulgarian-born violinist's interpretative style is tougher, too. Take the passage leading up to the cadenza in the *Allegro cavalleresco* section of the first movement (at around 12'45" in both recordings) where Nielsen gives the soloist a fusillade of semiquavers. Lee flits elegantly over the orchestra like a sparrow, while Petrova wrings out more drama, phrasing in a way that suggests an attitude of determined jubilation.

I don't mean to insinuate that Petrova's sound isn't beautiful. It is – when she wants it to be. I wrote 'ravishing tone!!!' in my notes for the lyrical section halfway through the finale (starting at 4'26"). Indeed, I'd say Petrova plays with exceptional tonal variety. But what impresses me most, perhaps, is the way she binds phrases together. You can hear this plainly in the opening of the Nielsen, and again in the Prokofiev. Some violinists make the latter into something of a *bel canto* display, full of coy *pianissimos*. Petrova, more concerned with moulding expressive gestures and forming cogent paragraphs, cuts closer to the bone. I was startled, at first hearing, by the weightiness of her Scherzo – no Mendelssohnian quicksilver here – but am now rather smitten by its whiff of dark urgency. Note, too, her thick, gluey tone at 1'05", so marvellously grotesque. And, again, everything is sewn thoughtfully together so that when we reach the last minutes of the concerto

there's a vivid sense of a journey coming to an unpredicted end – those intensely wistful trills at 6'29" – and a transformation, a new world beginning.

The Odense Symphony Orchestra play with confidence and character under Kristiina Poska, and seem as absorbed in their music-making as Petrova, particularly in the Prokofiev. A marvellous disc.

Andrew Farach-Colton

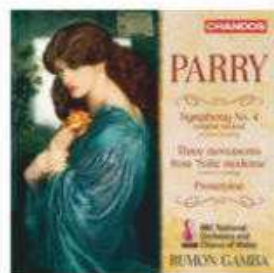
Parry

Symphony No 4. Suite moderne – three movements. Proserpine^a

^a**Ladies of BBC National Chorus of Wales;**

BBC National Orchestra of Wales / Rumon Gamba

Chandos © CHAN10994 (75' • DDD • T)



Three most welcome additions to the Parry discography, all enjoying a new lease

of life thanks to the indefatigable musicological efforts of Jeremy Dibble. Especially fascinating here is the original version of the Fourth Symphony, which was premiered under Hans Richter on July 1, 1889. An altogether darker, more ambitious and subtly worked canvas than the Third (a delightfully melodious, ebullient creation, first heard a mere five weeks previously), it was respectfully received by a St James's Hall audience that included Elgar in its ranks. Dan Godfrey gave the work again in Bournemouth on December 29, 1904, but five years later Parry drastically overhauled the score, keeping some of the thematic material but excising the 22-bar Intermezzo that bridges the first and slow movements, and replacing the winsome Scherzo (which the critic of the *Musical Times* described as 'an al fresco fête in the olden time – a coquettish dance of lords and ladies, interrupted by a song') with an entirely new specimen. To my ears at least the comprehensive changes Parry effected were nearly all entirely beneficial, but no aficionado should miss the opportunity to get to know this likeable symphony in its initial guise.

Next comes Parry's sole ballet score, *Proserpine*. Completed in 1912 (the same year brought us his *Ode on the Nativity* and Fifth Symphony) and lasting just under 11 minutes, it was written at the behest of Norman O'Neill for the Keats-Shelley Festival and staged at London's Haymarket Theatre. A lovely discovery it is, too, brimful of fresh-faced inspiration and also incorporating stanzas from Shelley's poem 'Song of Proserpine, whilst gathering

flowers on the plain of Enna' sung by a female chorus. Composed for the 1886 Three Choirs Festival in Gloucester, the *Suite moderne* (also known as the *Suite symphonique*) was overhauled six years later, after which it was taken up by Henry Wood. We are offered three of its four movements: a charming Romanza is flanked by a fragrantly songful Idyll (with echoes of this figure's captivating *English Suite*) and a vigorous Rhapsody in A minor. Perhaps Chandos will let us hear the opening Ballade in due course.

I can report that all this rewarding repertoire is decently served by Rumon Gamba and his combined BBC forces. Chandos's sound is ripe and true to match, and Jeremy Dibble supplies a most helpful annotation. **Andrew Achenbach**

Penderecki

'Hommage à Penderecki'

Duo concertante^a. La follia^b. Violin Concerto No 2, 'Metamorphosen'^c. Violin Sonata No 2^d

Anne-Sophie Mutter *vn*

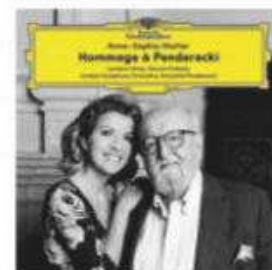
^a**Roman Patkoló** *db* ^d**Lambert Orkis** *pf* ^c**London**

Symphony Orchestra / Krzysztof Penderecki

DG © (two discs for the price of one) 483 5163GH2 (88' • DDD)

^cFrom 453 507-2GH (4/98); ^a477 9359GH (12/11);

^b479 2949GM2 (8/14)



Anne-Sophie Mutter has advocated contemporary music throughout her four-decade career and Krzysztof Penderecki above all, as this two-disc 85th birthday retrospective makes plain.

Interestingly the pieces are presented in reverse chronological order – opening with *La follia* (2013), the composer's contribution to a centuries-old tradition of variations on this indelible Baroque sarabande. Most notable is the way in which variations in the theme's stately tempo alternate with those of a wider expressive range, culminating in the extended 12th variation that intercuts such contrasting tempos in a 'stretto' of mounting intensity towards the grandly rhetorical close. Very different yet no less effective is *Duo concertante* (2010), an energetic and even jazzy workout for violin and double bass rendered with an almost nonchalant ease.

It is with the larger works that doubts emerge. Coming 49 years after its succinct predecessor, the Second Violin Sonata (1999) is cast on a large scale. The first two of its five movements unfold continuously as though a prelude and scherzo, their

plaintive then sardonic character contrasted with the central Notturmo, which interweaves somnolent and speculative passages. Here, as in the driving *Allegro* that follows, a tendency to discursiveness rather undermines any longer-term momentum such as the melancholy closing *Andante* itself fails to secure.

Penderecki's Second Violin Concerto, *Metamorphosen* (1995), was also his first collaboration with Mutter – channelling its varied emotional contrasts into an expansive yet cohesive single movement whose premise of continual variation is pursued with dogged intent. The fervency of Mutter's commitment is unerring, as is that of the London Symphony Orchestra under the composer, but it is a pity she has not tackled Penderecki's First Violin Concerto – among the earliest and arguably the most convincing of his essays in a combative neo-Romanticism.

Throughout, Mutter's playing has all the imperiousness this music requires. The sound has presence and immediacy (abrasively so in the concerto), and it hardly matters if the booklet note offers more a eulogy to her and Penderecki rather than any consideration of his music.

Richard Whitehouse

Poulenc

Piano Concerto^a. Organ Concerto^b.

Stabat mater^c

^aKate Royal *sop* ^aAlexandre Tharaud *pf* ^bJames O'Donnell *org* London Philharmonic ^cChoir and Orchestra / Yannick Nézet-Séguin

LPO © LPO0108 (72' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Royal Festival Hall, London,

^aOctober 23, 2013; ^bMarch 26, 2014

^bFrom LPO0081 (12/14)



It could take traditional labels years to attract artists of this calibre to

record works of this scale. Instead we have two eavesdrops on two evenings at the Royal Festival Hall from the back end of Yannick Nézet-Séguin's tenure as the LPO's Principal Guest Conductor.

At one level, it's an embarrassment of riches for Poulenc fans. On another, it speaks of the *modus operandi* of London orchestras where rehearsal time is short and much depends on the atmosphere of the evening. Nézet-Séguin often got the best out of the London Philharmonic Choir (there's a touching Brahms Requiem from the same source – 8/10) and, for an amateur chorus, they sound

excellent for him in Poulenc's *Stabat mater* – a fatter, softer performance than we are used to but one that has drama and atmosphere, and fulsome applause at the end. Highlights include some gorgeous string colour in the 'Fac ut ardeat', the way the orchestra coils around Kate Royal's modulating phrase-ends in 'Vidit suum' (such tenderness from her) and the declamation in 'Inflammatu et accensus'.

In the Organ Concerto, previously released by the LPO label with a different coupling, James O'Donnell plays relatively straight and lets the zest and colour of his registrations on the spruced-up RFH instrument do the character work. There are one or two moments when soloist and ensemble aren't quite locked together but the chase-down of the *Allegro giocoso* is taut and the *Molto agitato* lovely and crisp. There is a certain advantage in having both orchestra and organ effectively play from the same stage; on the other side of the coin, I miss the cartoon irony, rampant charisma and fairground effects of Ian Tracey and the BBC Philharmonic under Yan Pascal Tortelier, a recording from Liverpool's gargantuan Anglican Cathedral which shouldn't work but does.

Against that piece, Poulenc's Piano Concerto can seem overly long for the depth of its material. Or perhaps it needs more sculpting – and a few more clearly defined colours – than it gets here. Again there is some irony missing in the slow movement; the close but woolly recorded sound and the thick embrace of the LPO strings might not be considered ideal, despite Tharaud's brilliance. Again the BBC Philharmonic, with Louis Lortie and Edward Gardner, are more hasty, clean and clear – all of which benefit the piece. But you don't often get three such works on one disc, nor such artists all led by Nézet-Séguin's communicative enthusiasm.

Andrew Mellor

Organ Concerto – selected comparison:

Tracey, BBC PO, Tortelier (11/94) (CHAN) CHAN9271

Piano Concerto – selected comparison:

Lortie, BBC PO, Gardner (10/15) (CHAN) CHAN10875

Rachmaninov

'Destination Rachmaninov - Departure'

JS Bach Solo Violin Partita No 3, BWV1006

(transcr Rachmaninov) – Preludio; Gavotte;

Gigue Rachmaninov Piano Concertos^a –

No 2, Op 18; No 4, Op 40^b

Daniil Trifonov *pf* ^aThe Philadelphia

Orchestra / Yannick Nézet-Séguin

DG © 483 5335GH (70' • DDD)

^bRecorded live at Verizon Hall, Philadelphia,

October 2015



Every pianist who records Rachmaninov's Second Concerto

these days has to have their own take, it seems, on the famous opening eight measures. What the composer notated is, apparently, ripe for improvement. Thus Trifonov gives us the first four bars at a consistent *mezzo-forte* (not *pianissimo*, *poco a poco crescendo*), thereafter inserting the acciaccaturas which Rachmaninov played on both his 1924 and 1929 recordings but which are not in the score. Trifonov and Nézet-Séguin bring to these opening pages an atmosphere of pessimism and sorrow. It's a view. Mine is that it all gets off to a bad start. Thereafter things go more or less swimmingly, for Trifonov is a gifted pianist, the Philadelphians have the music in their blood and Nézet-Séguin has an eye for detail and careful phrasing (though I was not totally convinced by the tempo relationships in the last movement). Overall, this is another fine, well-recorded addition to the lengthy discography but one which neither astonished nor moved me.

Far more successful is the Fourth Concerto, recorded live (unlike the Second) some two and a half years earlier in the same venue (Verizon Hall, Kimmel Center, Philadelphia). This is adroitly and excitingly executed by Trifonov while taking slightly more measured tempos in all three movements than Rachmaninov, Michelangeli and Hough (all roughly the same). The bloom and intonation of the Philadelphia strings are a delight and one would be lucky indeed to be introduced to this marvellous score through this recording, though the presence of any audience comes as a surprise when enthusiastic applause and whooping greet the end of the performance.

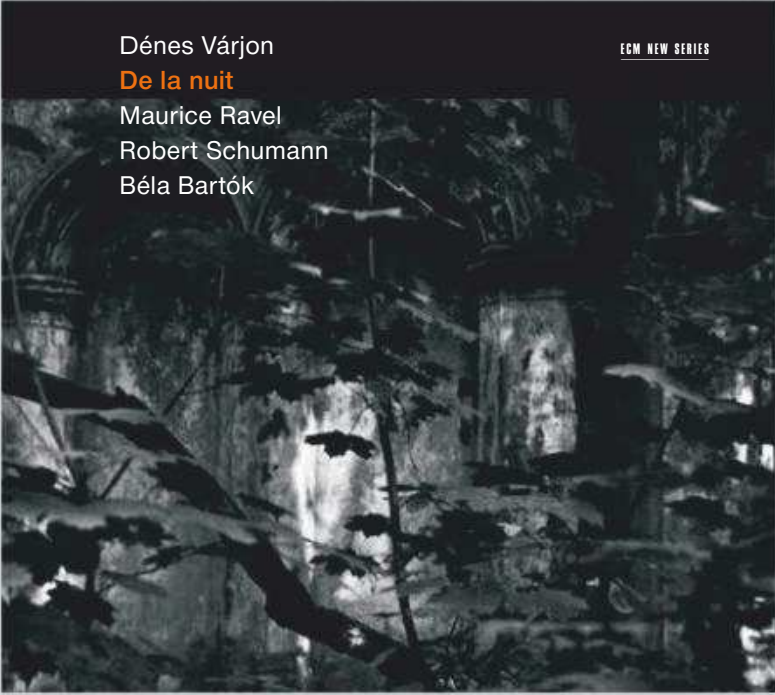
In between the two concertos come the three movements transcribed by Rachmaninov of Bach's seven-movement E major Partita for solo violin. Their good humour and charm completely elude Trifonov, who is merely dutiful and matter-of-fact compared with the light-hearted touch of Idil Biret, let alone the composer (1942).

The marketing of this release relies on the somewhat strained concept of a musical journey. Hence the sequence of striking faux-1920s photographs of Daniil Trifonov with a suitcase and dressed like a Russian spy on a historical railway (actually the Bluebell Line in Sussex). The disc's title

Dénes Várjon
De la nuit

Robert Schumann Fantasiestücke op. 12
Maurice Ravel Gaspard de la nuit
Béla Bartók Out of Doors

“Várjon’s brilliant technique and imaginative approach make a strong narrative out of each work.”
– The Observer
“Dénes Várjon is the latest Apollo among pianists... An unrelentingly bewitching programme and perfectly engineered.”
– Double 5 stars, BBC Music Magazine
Recording of the Month



CD 4817003

ECM NEW SERIES

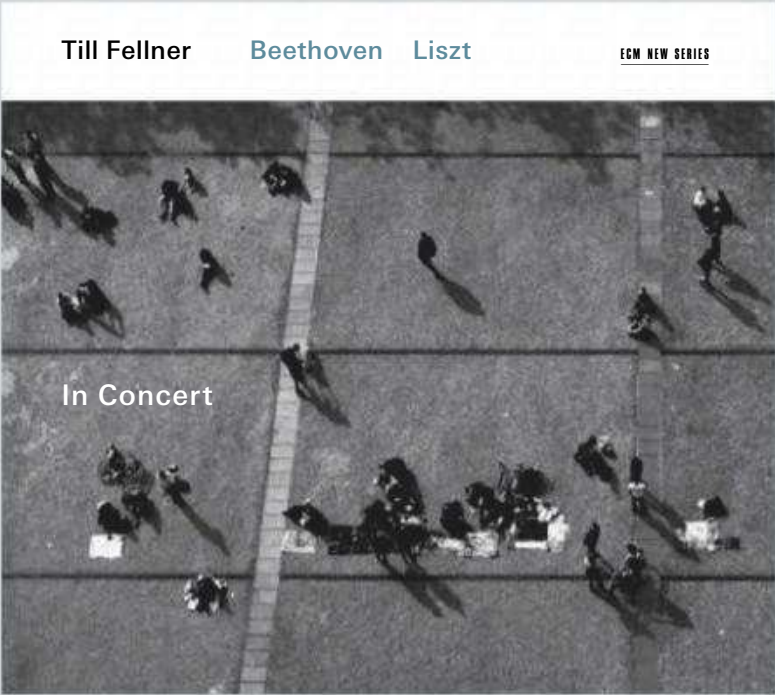
Franz Schubert
Die Nacht

Anja Lechner, violoncello
Pablo Márquez, guitar

Cellist Anja Lechner and guitarist Pablo Márquez play some of Schubert’s most enigmatic *lieder*, elegantly framing the album’s centrepiece, Schubert’s “Arpeggione” Sonata.



CD 4817172



CD 4816837

Till Fellner
In Concert

Franz Liszt Années de pèlerinage – Suisse
Ludwig van Beethoven Sonata No. 32

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2-CD 4817007

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Scriabin specialist

James Kreiling

invites us into the composer's heady and intoxicating musical world as he performs Scriabin's complete late piano music.



The late miniatures heard on this release are perhaps the best place to start if approaching this music for the first time. More than just musical experiments in preparation for the longer sonatas, they are perfectly contained musical worlds, each entirely different and unique from the others. Scriabin specialist James Kreiling brings a rare level of insight and inspiration to his performances of these works. Every nuance is understood and communicated with subtlety and sensuality, the kaleidoscope of Scriabin's palette of colours drawn out in Kreiling's outstanding interpretations.

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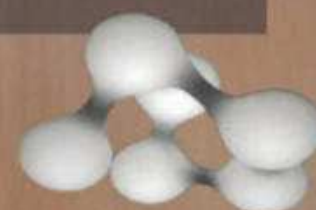


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‘Destination Rachmaninov – Departure’ adds nothing to one’s understanding or enjoyment of the contents. **Jeremy Nicholas**

Scriabin

Symphony No 1, Op 26^a

Prometheus: The Poem of Fire, Op 60^b

^aAlisa Kolosova *mez* ^aAlexey Dolgov *ten*

^bKirill Gerstein *pf* Oslo Philharmonic

^aChoir and Orchestra / Vasily Petrenko

LAWO © LWC1160 (70’ • DDD)



The last instalment of Vasily Petrenko’s Scriabin series contains works written

only a decade apart, separated by a stylistic chasm. The First Symphony, a *fin de siècle* charmer in six movements, is no longer a rarity. It has its longueurs so Petrenko keeps them at bay. His opening *Lento* is fresh and translucent, less luxuriantly romantic than Riccardo Muti’s one-take wonder. That tends to be the pattern throughout. Petrenko elicits string lines more precision-tooled than plush with many an eloquent woodwind solo; the piece is viewed whole, its proto-Hollywood tendencies undersold.

Given the notoriously spotty resonance of the orchestra’s own hall, the sound engineering is extremely well handled. Only Mikhail Pletnev (Pentatone, 8/15) can boast more sophisticated sound. The classic Muti version, made in the basketball court of Philadelphia’s Memorial Hall (EMI, 3/86), dates from as long ago as 1985, while Valery Gergiev (LSO, 7/16) has to contend with the denser impact of the Barbican acoustic as mediated by a production team headed by the late James Mallinson. In Petrenko’s finale the soloists are perhaps unduly prominent, the tenor sounding strained despite managing the high B eschewed by his counterparts under Pletnev and Gergiev.

Tchaikovsky and Wagner are left behind in *Prometheus*, whose previous soloists include Dmitri Alexeev (EMI, 7/91), Martha Argerich (Sony, 3/95) and Vladimir Ashkenazy (Decca, 1/72) – and we haven’t got beyond the As. Argerich, who has Claudio Abbado drawing unaccustomed raw intensity from his Berlin brass, is predictably galvanic (with the added advantage that this 1992 concert performance has an imaginatively framed audio-visual equivalent on EuroArts). For their own supercool Oslo happening, Kirill Gerstein, Petrenko and his band were also accompanied by a synaesthesiac light show of which the booklet provides some photographic evidence. Less happily, only

a small fraction of Scriabin’s original text from the First Symphony’s final movement is provided and that only in Norwegian and English.

Never discursive or splashy, Petrenko’s forensic view of the composer may not please those brought up on Soviet-era music-making but I found it very persuasive. **David Gutman**

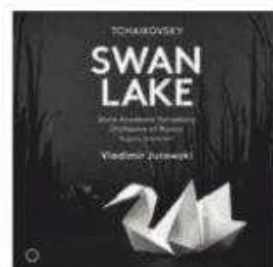
Tchaikovsky

Swan Lake, Op 20

State Academic Symphony Orchestra of Russia

‘Evgeny Svetlanov’ / Vladimir Jurowski

Pentatone © ② PTC5186 640 (152’ • DDD)



Vladimir Jurowski has a beef with ballet companies and the 1895 revision of *Swan*

Lake. In last month’s enthralling ‘The Musician and the Score’ feature, he objected to the version prepared after Tchaikovsky’s death, complaining about the reordering of music, the deletions and the slow tempos required to execute Lev Ivanov and Marius Petipa’s choreography. He’s got a point, especially about the music Riccardo Drigo inserted into Act 4 (orchestrating a couple of Tchaikovsky’s piano miniatures), which punctures tension just when it should be cranking up. But the revised libretto, by the composer’s brother, Modest, is stronger; and shifting the peasants’ *pas de deux* from Act 1 to become the famous ‘Black Swan’ *pas* of Act 3 is dramatic genius.

‘The musical structure was built as if writing a symphony’, Jurowski says, arguing the case for Tchaikovsky’s original 1877 version. Well, up to a point. I’d counter that *Swan Lake* doesn’t quite have the same grand symphonic sweep as *The Sleeping Beauty* – already brilliantly recorded by the conductor and the State Academic Symphony Orchestra of Russia ‘Evgeny Svetlanov’ (ICA Classics, 12/17). In the booklet to this excellent new account of *Swan Lake*, Jurowski cites elderly Soviet recordings of the original version by Rozhdestvensky and Svetlanov, taped under ‘problematic studio conditions’. He’s being a little disingenuous. Although most ballet companies’ productions are based on the 1895 revision, you’d be hard-pushed to find it on disc. Valery Gergiev recorded it with the Mariinsky (Decca), cutting the *pas de six* and adding Drigo’s interpolations. Most recordings follow the 1877 version. Most include the ‘Danse russe’, written for ballerina Pelageya Karpakova at the premiere, presumably

because her Odile didn’t have enough to do in Act 3. Neeme Järvi and Dmitry Yablonsky additionally throw in the *pas de deux* Tchaikovsky was arm-twisted into composing for Anna Sobeshchanskaya (also in 1877) for Act 3. See – the need for a ‘Black Swan’ *pas* was obvious right from the start!

This is a terrific new account. Jurowski’s ‘Svetlanov’ Orchestra – basically the old USSR State Symphony – really has this music coursing through its veins. The orchestra still has a distinctly Russian flavour, even if the paint-stripper brass and acidic oboe of yore have been polished up. The strings are sumptuously rich, while the woodwinds are superb – the aristocratic trill with which the clarinet ends the Intrada of the *pas de trois* (disc 1, track 5) is outrageously good.

Jurowski’s tempos are robust – the coda to No 5 (disc 1, track 14) would be too fast even for Yulia Stepanova’s firecracker *fouettés* at the Bolshoi – yet most speeds are in line with many versions on disc. Indeed, setting aside the additional Sobeshchanskaya *pas de deux*, Neeme Järvi’s bracing Bergen account romps home a good six minutes faster. But there’s real swagger and élan to the national dances, and the violin solos – uncredited in the booklet but presumably the work of concertmaster Sergey Girshenko – have old-school charm and eloquence. Jurowski is truly alive to the drama, with a febrile intensity to the finale. For sheer thrills, Järvi just about holds the palm, but make no mistake: Jurowski’s *Swan Lake* is up there with the very best. **Mark Pullinger**

Selected comparisons:

Russian St SO, Yablonsky (1/03) (NAXO) 8 555873/4

Mariinsky Orch, Gergiev (1/08) (DECC) 475 7669DH2

Bergen PO, N Järvi (3/14) (CHAN) CHSA5124

USSR St SO, Svetlanov (MELO) MELCD100 0403

Watkins

Flute Concerto^a. Violin Concerto^b. Symphony^c

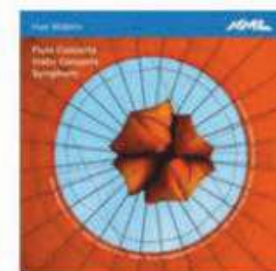
^aAdam Walker *fl* ^bAlina Ibragimova *vn*

^bBBC Symphony Orchestra / Edward Gardner;

^cHallé Orchestra / Ryan Wigglesworth

NMC © NMCD224 (67’ • DDD)

^bRecorded live at the Royal Albert Hall, London, August 17, 2010



If music is, indeed, ‘the food of love’, then Huw Watkins’s Flute Concerto (2013) does have ‘excess of it’! I recall its broadcast on Radio 3 (via the iPlayer) a year or so ago and was enchanted; renewing my acquaintance has been an unalloyed joy.

Cast in the conventional three movements, the music dances through a musical landscape full of light and shade. Its invigorating sense of pace and momentum is beautifully caught by Adam Walker – who premiered it in 2014 – beautifully accompanied by the Hallé Orchestra under Ryan Wigglesworth. This is the finest British flute concerto since Robert Simpson's and John McCabe's (both from 1989-90).

Designed, according to Steph Power's informative booklet note, 'to reflect Ibragimova's dynamic and intense, fiercely intelligent playing', the Violin Concerto (2010) has the same *Allegro molto-Andante-Allegro molto* format as the Flute Concerto but its emotional landscape is very different – more seriously dramatic – yet the lyricism is, if anything, even more acute. This recording is of the work's blistering Proms premiere in August 2010, superbly engineered to be of a piece with the companion works.

The Violin Concerto also exhibits a trait that is something of a favourite of the composer's, a way of sidestepping traditional movement endings, as if pulling the rug from under your feet. That is even more apparent in the most recent work here, the coruscating Symphony composed in 2016-17. A diptych in structure, it also ends with a sidestep, here the focal point of this exciting symphony's structure. It is a work one has to go back to straight away and Mark Wigglesworth's account, with the Hallé on sublime form, is superb. Another great British symphony, strongly recommended. **Guy Rickards**

'American Concertos'

Bernstein Serenade (after Plato's Symposium)^a.

West Side Story – Symphonic Dances^b

Korngold Violin Concerto, Op 35^a

Rózsa Violin Concerto, Op 24^c

^a**Baiba Skride** ^{vn} ^a**Gothenburg Symphony**

Orchestra; ^{bc}Tampere Philharmonic Orchestra / Santtu-Matias Rouvali

Orfeo Ⓢ (two discs for the price of one)

C932 182A (117' • DDD)



Baiba Skride has been recording large swathes of the concerto repertoire in relatively short order, travelling both along and off the beaten path. This programme of American music puts her versatility in sharp relief. Let's start with the earliest work, Korngold's luscious Concerto in D (1946), written for Jascha Heifetz. Skride has real feeling for the music's extravagant

yearning and she conveys it without ever slipping into cloying sentimentality – no small feat in this temptingly sweet score. And although she phrases with an eye (or ear) for the long view, she doesn't stint on expressive detail. Listen, for instance, to the long, lingering portamento she adds at 5'28" in the first movement; or, starting at 3'58" in the Romance, to how beautifully her rubato sets up the dreamlike section that follows. I also appreciate the way she occasionally roughs up her tone in the finale, at least somewhat mitigating its relentless slapstick character.

Miklós Rózsa's Concerto (1953), also composed for Heifetz, is much more of a rarity – and understandably so. The orchestration is attractively lush, the language vaguely and pleasantly evocative of Bartók, but there's a lot of meandering, too. Heifetz, in his pioneering recording, helped sustain tension by keeping things moving; Skride opts to observe Rózsa's tempo markings more thoughtfully. In the first movement, for example, she gives us the *passionato* while respecting the cautionary *Allegro non troppo* indication. She takes a leisurely tempo for the *Lento cantabile*, making it into an amorous reverie full of idealism and vulnerability. Heifetz is Heifetz, of course, and his highly volatile, intensely lyrical account should remedy the grouching that his playing is chilly. Skride is persuasive in her own way, however, particularly as she plays it with such beautiful, singing tone.

The Serenade (1954) is among Bernstein's most perfect, concise creations and Skride really digs into it. Note how she starts the introductory solo so simply and sincerely, then gradually increases the intensity in her tone as the string orchestra joins her. It's absolutely gripping as well as plain gorgeous, her glistening tone reflecting the glitter of percussion. I do wish she and the Gothenburg Orchestra put more swing in the faster, dancelike sections of the work. They're a bit stiff, as if this were Stravinsky. But that in itself is interesting, as it sets the Serenade down squarely in the European tradition where it rightly belongs. Alas, Santtu-Matias Rouvali isn't nearly as persuasive in the Symphonic Dances from *West Side Story*. Where's the lilt in the Scherzo ('Maria') or the insinuation of sleaze and slickness in 'Cool'? Even the 'Rumble' is over-choreographed, eliciting no sense of danger or impending tragedy.

Both orchestras provide excellent support in the concertos, however, although differing sound quality has a surprisingly significant effect. The Gothenburg recording puts orchestra and soloist practically in your lap, with

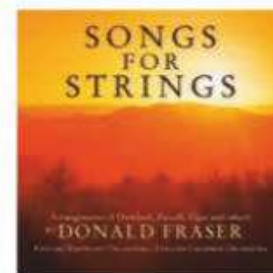
unusually powerful bass; in Tampere, the engineers find a more natural balance but the relative lack of impact is conspicuous.

Andrew Farach-Colton

'Songs for Strings'

Dowland Time Stands Still^a Elgar The Queen's Hall^b. Three Songs^b David Fraser Lord Lovat's Lament^a Donald Fraser Epilogue^a Liszt Nuages gris, S199^a Lotti Crucifixus^a Marais Sonnerie^a Porpora Fugue in G minor^a Purcell Ground, Z221^a Ravel À la manière de Borodine^a Scriabin Canon^a Vivaldi Concerto, RV531 - Largo^a (all arr Donald Fraser)

^b**English Chamber Orchestra; ^aEnglish Symphony Orchestra / Donald Fraser**
Avie Ⓢ AV2391 (59' • DDD)



Donald Fraser has made a very successful career from arrangements since his orchestral rescoring of Marin Marais's *The Bells of St Genevieve* back in the 1990s, the recent effort probably most interesting to *Gramophone* readers being his 2016 large-scale orchestration of Elgar's Piano Quintet and choral rearrangement of the *Sea Pictures* (7/16).

'Songs for Strings' now sees him conducting the English Chamber Orchestra and English Symphony Orchestra in string arrangements of smaller-scale pieces by the likes of Dowland, Vivaldi, Lotti and Elgar; and when clearly no expense has been spared here – the lion's share was recorded in Abbey Road Studios 1 and 2 no less – I feel bad that I can't be more enthusiastic.

The nub of the problem for me is that many of these pieces feel both more unwieldy and more uniformly coloured and textured than they do in their original incarnations, which makes for a fast onset of listening fatigue. Purcell's Ground in C minor is a particular case in point. Also Liszt's *Nuages gris*, which is such a multi-shaded, impressionistic gem in its original piano form but here appears substantially heavier-footed and less subtle. Then there's *Sonnerie*, Fraser's strings-and-electronics 'remix' of his own aforementioned Marais arrangement; and while with this one there's no shortage of additional colour, its sound world does rather make me think of 1980s sci-fi film.

All that said, there were pieces I enjoyed more. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, it's the Elgar offerings which feel the most comfortable in their new boots: the three art song arrangements and also *The Queen's Hall*, a new work based on a piano



On the road with Yuja Wang: a behind-the-scenes documentary illustrates the solitary sacrifices familiar to so many great artists

improvisation recorded by Elgar in 1929. Equally nice are the Scottish folk-cum-martial strains of *Lord Lovat's Lament*, a piece written by a Scottish ancestor of Fraser's who served as piper to the head of the Fraser clan, Lord Lovat.

It's all nicely played, but perhaps the best way to appreciate this album's merits is by way of a track here and there, rather than as an end-to-end listen. **Charlotte Gardner**

'Through the Eyes of Yuja'



A Road Movie by **Anaïs & Olivier Spiro**

Bonus: 'Yuja Wang at Salzburg Festival'^a

Gershwin Rhapsody in Blue

Ravel Piano Concerto in G

Yuja Wang *pf*

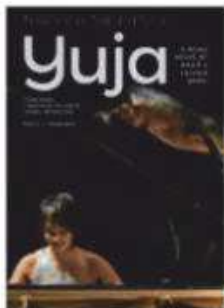
^a**Camerata Salzburg / Lionel Bringuier**

C Major Entertainment © 745408;

© 745504 (89' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i •

^aDTS-HD MA5.1, ^aDTS5.1 & PCM stereo • O)

^aRecorded live, August 12, 2016



Having watched this relatively brief (47 minutes) portrait, one is left in no doubt about how very lonely

is the life of Yuja Wang. Perhaps it is not as lonely as it appears to be – I hope not – but the film's makers, intentionally or otherwise, make it clear that there is a high price to pay for the kind of success and adulation the Chinese superstar currently enjoys as 'one of the most sought-after artists of our time', to quote the DVD's blurb. The documentary follows her from country to country, from venue to venue, from anonymous hotel room to anonymous hotel room – a bleak and endless trek between one airport and another with a bag of music and a cellphone for company.

She herself acknowledges her predicament by reading an excerpt from Italo Calvino's cult novel *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller*: '... How do you occupy yourself? You read. You do not raise your eyes from the book between one airport and the other because beyond the page there is a void ...'. 'It's like it's written for me', she says. 'It's exactly my experience.'

Yuja comes alive, it seems, only when she is on stage playing the piano, as is vividly demonstrated by the documentary and the complete performances of *Rhapsody in Blue* and the Ravel G major Concerto which form the 'bonus' section

of the disc. Self-contained and unconnected, she makes her trademark swift low jab of a bow to the audience (how and why does she do that?), takes her seat at the piano and is at once transformed into another being, not only utterly transported by the joy and beauty of what she is playing but able to radiate that to the back of the stalls. A rare gift.

There seems to be nothing else in her life, no partner or manager in tow and, with a couple of brief exceptions, no friends to chill with. She is understandably bored answering the same stale questions about her image. 'It's so superficial. Things are much more complicated than they appear. I want [journalists and the public] to think of me as an adventurous, creative and daring artist. I do want them to think that first, rather than fast fingers, high heels and short dress.'

Her many fans will relish this honest, imaginatively photographed and well-crafted road movie. Whatever would Dame Myra think of it all? **Jeremy Nicholas**

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Schubert's 'Death and the Maiden'

The **Chiaroscuro Quartet**'s violinists guide Charlotte Gardner through String Quartet No 14

Sparrring wood nymphs and stacked suitcases weren't the sorts of images I'd have ever anticipated walking away with from a session on Schubert's *Death and the Maiden* Quartet. Still, the Chiaroscuro Quartet themselves have always felt gently, attractively distinctive with their gut strings, period bows and preference for playing standing up. So when I get around to playing back my interview, which was conducted over brunch in a cafe in Peckham, south-east London, with quartet violinists Alina Ibragimova and Pablo Hernán Benedí, it comes as no surprise to hear what a natural fit those images are; an easy conviviality leaps off my recorder, the artists' words dovetailing with each other as though they were humanly living out their violinistic relationship.

An all-Schubert effort pairing the famous String Quartet No 14 with No 9 in G minor, their album released this month on BIS sees the Chiaroscuro Quartet bring the composer into the recording studio for the first time since their 2011 debut album featuring the *Rosamunde* Quartet. And the experience has clearly been a happy one. 'It's a really special world to be able to float in,' affirms Ibragimova. 'It's ambiguous, very subtle, very happy and sad, like smiling through tears; and within that there's so much room to manoeuvre, because there are so many different shades to it.'

The Chiaroscuro feel particularly well placed to find those shades. 'When you need to change the character completely in the space of one note, there is an edge, a sensitivity, to a gut string that allows you to do that,' explains Ibragimova. 'Although on metal strings I think you get a possibly more satisfying sound straight away, I guess it's a bit like the difference between a manual and an automatic car – we have the freedom to do something wonderful but also to completely mess it up. Which I like!'

The quartet also had the benefit of a session with Sir John Eliot Gardiner before entering the studio. 'It was amazing,' remembers Benedí. 'We'd already played two or three quartets, we'd had dinner, and then very late at night, after some beautiful red wine, he just said, "Right! *Death and the Maiden*! Come on!"'

'For some reason we didn't have stands,' smiles Ibragimova. 'Instead, we had sort of constructions of suitcases. Given that we always stand we needed quite a few of them!'

Zeroing in on the quartet's famous five opening notes, it's clear that both violinists could continue discussing these two bars for hours. 'You don't want to stay too long in that first note because you need the release of it without stopping playing,' states Ibragimova. 'Then there's the need for the four of us to have exactly the same intensity and idea about the silence after it, and also the subsequent silences in the *pianissimo*.'

'And, of course, there is the ever eternal question of accents in Schubert,' continues Benedí. 'You can't treat them the same way as you would in Beethoven. I think sometimes in Schubert it can mean just a little highlight which can be achieved with vibrato alone.' 'Take the accented minim in



(l-r) Alina Ibragimova, Pablo Hernán Benedí, Emilie Hörnlund and Claire Thirion

the second half of bar seven,' cites Ibragimova by way of an example. 'It can be just a softness. If you look at Schubert's handwriting in the manuscripts, the accents are written quite long, so people confuse them with diminuendos; but I wonder whether there is actually something in that. Although the ones in bar 15 will be sharper ...' 'The dagger marks – I mean, staccatissimo wedges,' specifies Benedí. 'Here it's very clear what kind of mood Schubert is creating: very charged and expectant. In rehearsals I would say, "Can we stay more up?" – because the phrase is still unresolved; a few centimetres above gravity.'

Dynamics assume control of the conversation when we reach bar 29. As Benedí enthuses: 'This is a beautiful example of *pianissimo* meaning more tension. In fact, it's almost even not a dynamic. I love this when you're really holding it tightly, and the *fortissimo* can be a release. But then the *pianissimo* at bar 61 when you hit the second subject is completely different: not troubled, much lighter, and you have to get this air rolling in.'

'It's like in Shakespeare when you get the funniest bits just before the really, really depressing ones,' suggests Ibragimova. 'And that's what I love about performing it,' interrupts Benedí. 'You really have to believe in this hint of possible goodness.'

After the development, which has them pondering over the importance of the keys and their relationships, it's on to the movement's final bars. 'The last note is quite short,' says Ibragimova. 'I mean, it's a bar, but it's a fast tempo, and that's all you get after such a huge movement. It's literally as though it's just cut off' – 'as if there's no more air,' concludes Benedí.

We turn to the second movement, and immediately there are amused glances across the table. 'The words of death over which we've had profound disagreements!' laughs Benedí. 'Basically, it's been over how slow to take the tempo, with me generally wanting it to go slower; incidentally, we had a similar

debate with the second movement of *Rosamunde*. Ibragimova seems to confirm these disagreements: 'For me it's not even about slowness, so much as about a certain swing. It's like a spiritual, you know? Something that's supposed to soothe you. It's about death, but it also has the feel of forgiveness.'

'It is a very major G minor, and flowing material,' acquiesces Benedí. 'So in essence we completely agree. But I was missing stillness at first. And look at the hairpin crescendo and decrescendo in the chorale's penultimate bar, 23; in Schubert, diminuendo often also means "a little bit of time", so we've wanted to treat these hairpins like an expansion of time – to be really in the moment.'


The second variation provides one of a few conversations over texture and balance. 'This is an example of four very clear layers,' outlines Benedí. 'So blending shouldn't be there. The cello carries the theme, but, for instance, my part's lower notes present a very interesting countermelody, while Alina has these off-beat gasps. So the theme needs to be reactive to all these layers, but with us also being aware of who is really speaking.'

'These chords: it should be as if we're dryads fighting each other!' – Alina Ibragimova

It's the second half of the third variation that finally brings us on to those aforementioned dryads. 'These amazing chords between me and Claire [Thirion] on the cello', says Ibragimova, pointing to the bars in question – 'how did John Eliot put it? That it should be as though we're dryads fighting each other! Or another comparison might be beavers: when they fight with their tails and the whole body literally goes, *whooph!* The tension and the total release of it. This seems to work when I'm doing up bows and Claire is doing down bows.'

Benedí, who's been letting out 'Rrrrrrrram!' sound effects, now says, 'I must say that when I heard the first edit of this I was proud.' 'It's really good,' agrees Ibragimova. 'I think it's also really well recorded. You never know how things will sound in their recorded form, but this just came out.'

The Scherzo provokes more talk of the challenges presented by Schubert's multi-nuanced moods. 'At the same time, it has to be serious and light, powerful but not angry,' explains Ibragimova. 'It's also another instance of things needing to feel "up" and free, but with so many *sforzandos* and accents there's the danger of sinking.' This danger remains in their minds as we turn to the opening 16 bars of the tarantella finale, and observe how vertically neat the unison rhythm looks on the score. 'Printed music isn't always very helpful to the player,' muses Ibragimova, as Benedí talks of avoiding downward lines. 'It looks so square and symmetrical on the page.'

The precise quality of the movement's *Presto* marking is what grabs everyone's attention next. 'John Eliot made us go faster than what we already thought was our extreme,' remembers Ibragimova. 'In fact, working with him was just a story of no boundaries. Wild and liberating. I should also say here that we don't hook notes into the same bow – we start with an up bow then play everything as it comes, which is helped by our lighter bows.' Then there are those final *fff* chords, which they play while holding in mind this work's distinctiveness when set against other Schubert works. 'It's the directness,' says Ibragimova, 'but still with those ambiguous contrasts of joy and sadness.' 

► The Chiaroscuro's recording of *Death and the Maiden* is reviewed on page 58



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Liam Cagney offers a round-up embracing contemporary quietism:

'One listens to the pressure of bow on string, the breath inside the flute – the flecked surface of the auditory canvas' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 60**

Bartók

Six String Quartets

Arcadia Quartet

Chandos ⑤ ② CHAN10992 (160' • DDD)



Wonderfully, we've reached a point where Bartók's six string quartets are as much

a calling card for an emerging quartet as Beethoven or Haydn. In their first recording for Chandos, the Arcadia Quartet show that they know their territory from the inside. As they explain in the booklet, they live and work in Cluj-Napoca in Transylvania, at the heart of the intermingled traditions of Romanian, Hungarian and Roma music that shaped Bartók's emerging musical language.

If that arouses expectations of raw, rustic abandon, put them aside. Cluj-Napoca is surrounded not by the wild mountains of Bram Stoker's imagination but by softly rolling hills. And behind every interpretation in this civilised, wonderfully atmospheric cycle, there's a sense of deep assurance that makes any preconceptions about folk fiddles feel slightly embarrassing. Take the long cello and violin solos in the nocturnal central movement of No 4. There's an eloquent poise to the way Ana and Zsolt Török phrase their lines that relates this music directly to central European classicism, and if you've already listened to the first movement of No 1, you'll have expected no less. The violins unfurl their opening sighs wistfully and inwardly: this is music that's emerging from an unmistakably Romantic world.

In fact, these readings are so poetic and spacious that my first reaction to the opening movement of No 2 was 'streamlined' – so euphonious is the sound of the ensemble and so long-breathed their approach to Bartók's slower music. Ensemble chords are ringing and ripe; cello and viola together generate a rich, velvety sonority to which the violins

add a gleam that never entirely sharpens to a dazzle – not that it needs to here. Percussive pizzicatos and *sul ponticello* shivers are relished, but also controlled, and never played purely as effects. Chandos's warm, slightly misty acoustic sets up a poetic atmosphere without blurring *pianissimo* detail.

True, you might prefer a more forensic approach to the single-movement Third Quartet or the jackhammer opening motif of the Fifth, but then perhaps you'd lose the doleful, quizzical aspect that the Arcadia Quartet give to the glissandos in No 3's *Ricapitolazione* and the mood of tear-stained confession that they manage to imply in the background of even the faster movements of the Sixth Quartet. None of which is to deny that when the Arcadias catch the rhythmic groove of Bartók's dance movements – the *Alla bulgarese* scherzo of No 5 has a particularly infectious swing – they can cut loose with positively Haydnesque verve.

There are certainly tauter, more focused Bartók cycles available: by comparison, the Heath Quartet's recent cycle sounds precision-tooled. But if I was asked to recommend a Bartók cycle to a first-time listener intimidated by his spiky reputation, I'd send them straight to the Arcadia Quartet. Even for the aficionado, this spacious, big-hearted vision of Bartók as poet, dreamer and humourist has something distinctive and beautiful to say. **Richard Bratby**

Selected comparison:

Heath Qt (9/17) (HARM) HMM90 7661/2

Beethoven

Violin Sonatas – No 1, Op 12 No 1;

No 5, 'Spring', Op 24; No 10, Op 96

Lorenzo Gatto *vn* Julien Libeer *pf*

Alpha ⑤ ALPHA407 (71' • DDD)



It might seem perverse to begin a chamber review by discussing the

piano, especially when the violinist Lorenzo Gatto is playing the 1698 'Joachim' Strad. But listen to even a few bars of Op 12 No 1 and I suspect you, too, will be sent back to the booklet in search of more information. Imagine a warm, transparent modern piano sound coupled to the clarity of attack (and, when desired, the swiftness of decay) of an early 19th-century instrument. Now imagine its potential in the hands of a pianist as sensitive and intelligent as Julien Libeer.

Libeer is playing a straight-strung concert grand by the Belgian maker Chris Maene. Daniel Barenboim commissioned the first, as recently as 2013, but Classical and early Romantic chamber music seems to be its natural home: especially in sonatas (such as Beethoven's Op 12 set) which the composer specified were 'for piano and violin' rather than the other way around. That's essentially what you get throughout these three thoughtful, unaffected readings. Whether or not these two artists intended an approach that would place Libeer's piano on equal terms with Gatto's unglossy chamber-scale violin sound I don't know; but the instrument allows Libeer to be expansive, brisk and brilliant as required, without ever threatening to overwhelm his partner.

They swing forwards enthusiastically in the scherzos of Opp 24 and 96 but the hearts of these readings are in the slower, more intimate music: the stillness that spreads across the centre of the finale of Op 96 is profound, and the dialogue that launches that particular sonata seems to emerge out of nowhere. This is deeply unshowy Beethoven but it's intensely sincere and it sounds entirely new. Try it. **Richard Bratby**

Debussy

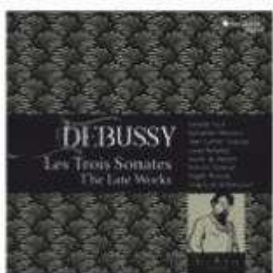
'Les trois sonates – The Late Works'

Violin Sonata^a. Cello Sonata^b. Sonata for Flute, Viola and Harp^c. Berceuse héroïque^d. Élégie^d. Page d'album^d. Les soirs illuminés par l'ardeur du charbon^d



Civilised and atmospheric: the Arcadia Quartet approach Bartók's string quartets with a Romantic sense of open-hearted poetry

Magali Mosnier *fl*^a **Isabelle Faust** *vn*^c **Antoine Tamestit** *va*^c **Xavier de Maistre** *hp*^b **Jean-Guihen Queyras** *vc*^a **Alexander Melnikov**, **Javier Perianes**, **Tanguy de Williencourt** *pf*
 Harmonia Mundi © HMM90 2303 (54' • DDD)



Described as 'testamentary' on its back cover, the latest release in Harmonia Mundi's Debussy anniversary series is perhaps more an act of commemorative reflection than an overt celebration of his genius. It gathers together, by no means for the first time on disc, the three sonatas, written between 1915 and 1917 as the First World War destroyed Debussy's world and cancer slowly ravaged his body. They're framed and separated here, however, by his four last, rarely heard piano pieces, all of them ostensibly *pièces d'occasion*, though they're linked by a deep, sometimes despairing sadness that reveals much about the anguish of his final years.

Three of them formed his contribution to the war effort. The sombre *Berceuse héroïque* was commissioned, along with pieces by Saint-Saëns, Mascagni and Elgar, by the *Daily Telegraph* for inclusion in a

volume entitled *King Albert's Book*, published in support of the beleaguered monarchy of occupied Belgium. The manuscript of *Élégie pour piano* was intended to be sold to raise money for war relief, while *Page d'album* was written for performance at a charity concert for 'Vêtement du blessé' ('Clothes for the wounded'), for which his wife worked as a volunteer. The saddest of the four is *Les soirs illuminés par l'ardeur du charbon*, Debussy's last work for piano, written during the bitter winter of 1916-17 as a gift to his coal supplier, one M Tronquin, in the hope that the latter would furnish him with enough fuel to keep warm.

Juxtaposed with the sonatas, they throw into relief the ambiguities of the latter, with their mixture of retrospection, fantasy and innovation. The Sonata for flute, viola and harp sounds more than ever like a final, nostalgic evocation of the worlds of *Faune* and *Bilitis* here: the performance is relaxed, fractionally too much so in the first movement, perhaps, but it tingles with sensuousness and the shifts in colour are all beautifully realised. Isabelle Faust and Alexander Melnikov's account of the Violin Sonata, Debussy's last completed score, embraces exquisite fragility and strength in equal measure, the finale

gathering itself for one last moment of assertion at the end. Jean-Guihen Queyras and Javier Perianes's performance of the Cello Sonata, noble in manner and grand in scale, balances the austere grief of the opening movement with understated wit in the *Sérénade* and nervous energy in the finale. Tanguy de Williencourt, meanwhile, binds the disc together with the four piano pieces, played with admirable restraint and quiet, if unsparing intensity. Listen to it in a single sitting, and in the right playing order: it's extraordinarily moving. **Tim Ashley**

Górecki • Pärt • Rääts

'Kaleidoscopic'

Górecki *Lerchenmusik*, Op 53 **Pärt** *Mozart-Adagio* **Rääts** *Kaleidoscopic Études*, Op 97
Patrick Messina *cl* **Henri Demarquette** *vc*
Fabrizio Chiovetta *pf*
 Aparté © AP187 (61' • DDD)



This year marks the centenary of Estonia's independence; yet, while plenty of attention has already been bestowed on the nation's most venerable composer,

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Alexander Shelley | Music Director



"imaginative and communicative"
Gramophone, August 2018



"uplifting, unsettling,
mischievous and deeply poignant"
BBC Music, December 2017



"three major new musical
compositions"
Ludwig Van Toronto, March 2018



"trenchancy and power"
Gramophone, June 2016



"buoyancy, point and poetry"
Gramophone, March 2017



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Arvo Pärt, important figures such as Veljo Tormis (b1930), Eino Tamberg (b1930) and Lepo Sumera (b1950), remain largely neglected.

Another Estonian whose music often falls under the radar is Jaan Rääts (b1932). A near-contemporary of Pärt, Rääts's music is about as far removed from Pärt's austere spiritualism as one might get. His *Kaleidoscopic Études* for clarinet, cello and piano, recorded here for the first time, is in many ways textbook Rääts: a highly colourful blend of rhythmically propelled repetition and pinball-effect polystylism. Energetic and unpredictable, the *Kaleidoscopic Études* dart this way and that across an action-packed 14 minutes, held together by a rigid metric template that allows sudden stylistic 'modulations' – a distinctive hallmark of Rääts's style – to take place. One imagines in this music what Stravinsky might have written had he been born half a century later.

Certain parallels can be drawn with the work that closes the disc, Henryk Górecki's *Lerchenmusik* recitatives and ariosos. Lasting over 40 minutes, each one of its three movements contains moments where the music shifts unexpectedly from quiet, still, barely audible expression to harsh, agitated and aggressive eruptions. But there the comparison ends. The playfulness of the *Kaleidoscopic Études* is replaced by a forbiddingly bleak and dark music, which is only checked by passages of mock-folk parody. The atmosphere is further intensified by Górecki's ability to stretch out material to the threshold of tolerance and acceptability. It's a powerful, sobering work.

In between the two lies a simple arrangement by Arvo Pärt of the slow (F minor) middle movement of Mozart's Piano Sonata K280, also for clarinet, cello and piano, which, other than a few harmonic tweaks, remains largely faithful to the original. Excellent performances are provided throughout by Messina, Demarquette and Chiovetta, their focused performances sharpening our vision of the kaleidoscopic music contained within.

Pwyl ap Siôn

Guillemain

Six Flute Quartets, Op 12

Wilbert Hazelzet fl *Fantasticus*

Resonus © RES10222 (45' • DDD)



'History is cruel, and the history of music is no exception', begin the notes to this latest

top-drawer offering from *Fantasticus*; notes which go on to remind us of the strange caprices of history which can reduce composers venerated in their lifetimes to trivial footnotes while elevating figures originally considered relatively unimportant to 'forgotten gem' status.

Louis-Gabriel Guillemain (1705-70) is certainly one such victim of this cruelty, given that as a master violinist he was once one of the most respected and highest-paid musicians at the court of Louis XV; although given no more than 18 works were published during his lifetime, we perhaps can't hold history entirely responsible for his profile having dipped since he took his own life in 1770 as a debt-ridden 65-year-old (by stabbing himself 14 times at the foot of a willow tree, if some contemporary accounts are to be believed).

On to these six Op 12 sonatas for transverse flute, violin, bass viol and basso continuo, and while they sit within the portion of Guillemain's output clearly pitched at a far wider, less virtuoso market than works such as his striking 12 Caprices for solo violin, this doesn't mean that they don't have a vim of their own, and indeed their technical difficulties. Hazelzet and *Fantasticus* make an immensely strong case for them here: smoothly flowing readings high on intellectual sparkle and cheerful chamber conviviality, nimbly wrought articulation and subtly instinctive shaping that brings out the conversational qualities of the solo lines. There's also a lovely blend to their sound, helped by a remarkably even balancing of parts which honours the writing's equal interplay between the instruments.

In other words, while history has perhaps been a little cruel to Guillemain, *Fantasticus* themselves have been very kind indeed.

Charlotte Gardner

Haydn • Ravel • Stravinsky

Haydn String Quartet, Op 54 No 2 Ravel String

Quartet. Menuet, Op *posth*^a. Menuet antique^a.

Menuet sur le nom d'Haydn^a Stravinsky

Concertino (^atranscr Ross Snyder)

Tesla Quartet

Orchid © ORC100085 (63' • DDD)



'Though free to think and act, we are held together like the stars in the firmament, with ties inseparable', we read in the booklet for the New York-based Tesla Quartet's debut album, quoting words from the Serbian-American inventor and engineer Nikola Tesla from whom the quartet take their

name. The disc's release also marks the 10th anniversary of their founding, and its programme is both delightfully quirky and personal. First violinist Ross Snyder tells us that hearing Ravel's Quartet as a teenager inspired him to become a chamber musician, and he describes Haydn's quartets, to which the Tesla have repeatedly returned over the years, as a 'pillar of our artistic identity'. Stravinsky's Concertino, he argues, shares its neoclassicism with Ravel and its inventiveness with Haydn. Each work is followed, meanwhile, by one of Snyder's own transcriptions of three Ravel menuets, originally written for piano, though *Menuet antique* was later orchestrated.

They are indeed a fine ensemble, whose playing is admirable in its tautness of focus and refinement of detail. Form and emotion are nicely balanced in the Ravel Quartet, an interpretation that opens coolly but then proceeds to probe the complex undercurrents of feeling that lurk beneath the music's fastidiously crafted surface. The pizzicato swagger at the start of the scherzo offsets the very real tenderness at its centre, and the agitation at the beginning of the finale seems all the more startling after the contained sadness of the slow movement. The Tesla darken their tone for Haydn's Op 54 No 2, which, similarly, is beautifully controlled. Leader-driven, the work itself is almost a concerto in miniature. Snyder negotiates its difficulties with unshowy finesse, and is particularly good in the first *Adagio*, where the incantatory violin hovers over a slow chorale and time briefly seems to stand still.

Snyder also does fine things, meanwhile, with the big cadenza that forms the slow central section of Stravinsky's brief Concertino in a performance that is all reined-in aggression and rhythmic exactitude. His Ravel transcriptions, however, aren't always ideally successful, despite the elegance of the playing. *Menuet sur le nom de Haydn* and its fragmentary counterpart in C sharp sound wistfully nostalgic but *Menuet antique* loses much of its wit and nobility (the score is marked *Majestueusement*) when played by four solo strings. The recording itself is superbly engineered. Tim Ashley

Locke

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Canon '4 in 2' on the Hexachord

Phantasm with Elizabeth Kenny *theorbo*

Emily Ashton, Jonathan Rees *viols*

Linn © CKD594 (73' • DDD)

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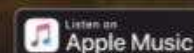


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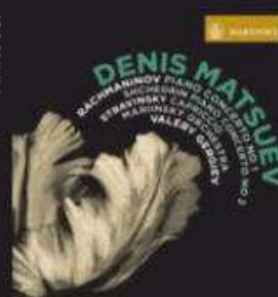


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This recording should come with a warning not to read the booklet notes

until after listening to the CD. Look no further than the opening sentence, in which Phantasm's founder and leader Laurence Dreyfus provocatively suggests that 'there may be no good reason to like the consort music of Matthew Locke'. Donning his professorial mortar board, Dreyfus at once enlightens us on the idiosyncratic nature of the music while parodying it in his prose. A tour de force? I fear some will be dissuaded from listening to the disc, which would be a shame, because it is indisputably superb.

Locke's music – suites and canons for four to six viols composed during the 1650s – is surprisingly tuneful and harmonically engaging. Phantasm's performances are compelling, their immaculate ensemble always internally balanced to best effect, their near-miraculous transparent textures brilliantly captured by the engineer. Dreyfus's choices of tempo and application of rubato are both refreshing and nuanced. Elizabeth Kenny's polished and beautifully judged theorbo accompaniments subtly enrich Locke's delicately chromatically inflected textures.

Each suite begins with a 'Fantazie' (each of *The Flat Consorts for my cousin Kemble* sports two) that is constructed in a series of contrasting sections (some of which are fugal), not unlike a miniature sinfonia or theatrical overture, and is succeeded by characterful, danceable courantes, sarabands and jiggs (in *The Flat Consorts*) or ayres (in the *Consorts of Four Parts*). The two exquisitely constructed canons in six parts are a true delight for lovers of consort music. It is recordings of this calibre that will attract new listeners to the English consort repertoire.

Julie Anne Sadie

Mozart

'Sonatas for Fortepiano & Violin, Vol 1'

Violin Sonatas – No 21, K304;

No 23, K306; No 35, K526

Isabelle Faust *vn* Alexander Melnikov *fp*

Harmonia Mundi © HMM90 2360 (66' • DDD)



The past couple of years have seen the appearance of Alina Ibragimova's cycle

of all Mozart's music for violin and keyboard, with the pianist Cédric Tiberghien (Hyperion). Their five two-disc sets were praised almost universally and would seem set fair to become a modern benchmark for this music. Now comes Isabelle Faust with the first volume of 'Sonatas for Fortepiano and Violin'. Whether that ultimately implies an exhaustive conspectus, like Ibragimova's, or just the later works, omitting the juvenilia, remains to be seen.

Faust and Ibragimova are similar musicians in many ways, equally adept on modern and period instruments and with an exploratory approach to everything they play. Ibragimova's Mozart was on modern instruments; Faust, on the other hand, plays her 1704 'Sleeping Beauty' Stradivari, while Alexander Melnikov's fortepiano is a copy of a 1795 Anton Walter. The difference in sound is apparent from the very first note of the D major Sonata, K306: a simple tune in thirds in the piano right hand over an Alberti-style left hand with the violin doubling, an octave higher, the implied bass line. The separation between instruments – the violin accompanying the keyboard here – is clearly demarcated between Ibragimova and Tiberghien, while the greater similarity of tone between Faust's sparkling violin and Melnikov's glittering fortepiano (within an airier acoustic) results in a sound more akin to the jingling of small bells. It's delicious.

This is domestic music, and the instruments of the day were scaled to such private performances. Modern instruments are designed to project, and Ibragimova and Tiberghien's readings were conceived to do just that: first in the Wigmore Hall, where they performed this cycle, then at the concert hall of the Wyastone Estate in Monmouth, their recording venue. Two contrasting conceptions of the same music.

Ibragimova's evenness and fullness of tone contrasts with Faust's range of dynamics, especially at low levels – there are some breathtaking *pianissimos* that whisper so confidently that the voice almost cracks. And repeated-note figures, in the finale of K306, say, draw a huge tonal variety from Faust's Strad. Melnikov's piano, too, can ring, roar or gently croon, making some beguiling sounds in the Schubertian hymn of K304's second movement.

Comparing the same sonatas in the two recordings has been instructive but has not made it any easier to decide

whether either is more valid, whether one is preferable to the other. Each has satisfied in its own ways, making a simple choice between one or the other invidious. Nevertheless, for those attuned to the less refined sound of period instruments, Faust and Melnikov demand to be heard. **David Threasher**

Selected comparisons:

Ibragimova, Tiberghien (5/16, 4/17, 4/18)

(HYPE) CDA68091, 68143, 68175

Mozart • Weber

Mozart Clarinet Quintet, K581

Weber Clarinet Quintet, Op 34

Julian Bliss *cl* Carducci Quartet

Signum © SIGCD552 (59' • DDD)



A pair of quintets composed for inspirational players, both of whom were

pioneers of the nascent clarinet and its technique. Anton Stadler specialised in low-register playing and helped devise the basset clarinet to extend the instrument's range downwards. It was for this instrument that Mozart composed the now lost original versions of the Clarinet Quintet and Concerto. Heinrich Baermann played a 10-key instrument that facilitated chromatic playing; he was said to display 'uniform quality of tone ... between the high and low notes'.

Julian Bliss, too, has pioneered advances in clarinet construction, as he explained in the October issue of *Gramophone*. His Leblanc Legacy instrument enables him to play evenly over the whole range – and you can hear this in the Weber Quintet, with its scalic passages across the entire compass, most notably in the Fantasia second movement and the exuberantly acrobatic finale. This is a work that especially exploits the brightness of the clarinet in its highest register: here music, instrument and soloist combine just about ideally.

Bliss switches to a basset clarinet for the Mozart Quintet and plays a reconstructed version that reinstates passages where the published score was clearly altered to enable its performance on the standard clarinet in A. (Stadler was not the most savoury of characters and is thought to have pawned the autographs of the Quintet and Concerto, so what Mozart actually wrote is lost to posterity.) You hear it from the clarinet's first entry, a whole third lower than in the 'traditional' version, exploiting the wonderful, woody timbre of the instrument in its lower reaches.

Bliss offers an unfussy reading in which his personality is reflected through his moment-to-moment inflections and sensitivity to dynamics rather than through ornamentation and display. The Carducci Quartet offer solid backing, lacking only the last degree of refinement, although a moment such as the *dolce* recapitulation in the slow movement of the Mozart is breathtaking in its tenderness. And the virtuosity of the Weber's finale is irresistible.

David Threasher

Reich

Drumming

Kuniko perc

Linn ⑤ CKD582 (70' • DDD)



'A *Drumming* for this decade – and probably a few to come' was my reaction to the Colin

Currie Group's recording of Steve Reich's magnum opus earlier this year (5/18) but this newcomer from Kuniko changes the game a little.

As I noted back then, *Drumming* signalled minimalism's fattening-up into something more maximal and less severe. It is an epic piece on every level, not least that of the human concentration required to play it with basic proficiency. The performance from Currie's ensemble was possessed of a collective joy that vibrated off the secure structural mainframe. I say 'secure'; but, of course, with 12 musicians each shimmying on to their own down-beat through a phasing process – and playing and singing with different muscles, techniques, voices and so on – absolute structural and timbral security is unattainable.

Is that part of *Drumming*'s thrill? Is its stretching of the very idea of ensemble-playing part of what makes it buzz? I had always thought so but this performance, in which Kuniko overdubs herself on every instrumental and vocal part, is good enough to question the idea. It is still a big test but, in terms of ensemble-playing, a slightly easier one: Kuniko spells out in the booklet that *Drumming* wobbles when its musicians can't hear each other or attain sufficient consistency of timbre.

Unsurprisingly, we get a highly focused performance from Kuniko; less joyous than Currie's, more zen and internalised. With each instrumental sound identical, it is all as clear as day. Kuniko's musicianship is colossal from

bongo to piccolo. The fundamental question is whether, for you, the whole minimalist project extends to sound production and forensic reproduction of the notes for the sake of clarity. Hearing Kuniko's voice in harmony with itself, and the forest of overtone sounds that unanimity of timbre generates, it's easy to conclude that this minimalist minimalism is truer to the cause. I relished it from start to finish and will continue to. But where this gives us fresh perspectives on the notes, a traditional performance will always have vital things to say about *Drumming* as a piece of ensemble music. **Andrew Mellor**

Schubert

String Quartets – No 9, D173;

No 14, 'Death and the Maiden', D810

Chiaroscuro Quartet

BIS ⑤ BIS2268 (63' • DDD)



'Immer zu! Ohne Rast und Ruh' – 'Ever onwards, without respite': these

words from Schubert's turbulent Goethe setting 'Rastlose Liebe' could stand as a motto to the Chiaroscuro's *Death and the Maiden*. This is not to imply any rigidity in their playing. But with their 'period' sound world (gut strings, Classical bows, sharp articulation) allied to hungry tempos and phrasing that vaults across the bar line, Schubert's darkest quartet seems more than ever a study in the inexorable power of rhythm. It is also, properly, a drama of uncomfortable extremes. In their dangerous night-ride of a finale, straining at the edge of the possible, the Chiaroscuro do not eschew harshness. Here and elsewhere their unvarnished sonorities (vibrato minimal or non-existent) make Schubert's harmonic clashes all the more excruciating. Dynamic contrasts are uncommonly vivid, with precise gradations of *piano*, *pianissimo* and *ppp*; the players understand, too, that Schubert's dynamic markings imply not merely degrees of softness but of colour and expressive import, as in the sudden pools of mystery amid the finale's desperate energy.

Each of the four movements seems conceived in a single sweep. Even the opening *Allegro*'s potentially assuaging second theme, usually a cue for momentary relaxation, is caught up in the ongoing tumult; and typically, Alina Ibragimova's filigree decorations on the theme's repeat are wonders of delicacy and nuance at

speed. After the coda's truly frantic *più mosso*, the Chiaroscuro, with their bleak, blanched *pianissimo*, suggest traumatised exhaustion: Schubert staring into the void.

Crucially, they observe Schubert's *con moto* marking for the Andante variations and his request for two rather than (as we often hear) four beats to the bar. In the process a dirge is infused with the grave lilt of a pavan. Again, the movement unfolds with a seemingly inevitable momentum, from the theme itself, where the Chiaroscuro evoke a viol consort, to the flare of violence (properly shocking here) in the final variation. Predictably by now, there is minimal lingering in the cello variation, No 2, and the ethereal major-key variation, No 4. Here and in the first movement, the quartet's lean sonorities and care for balance (helped by BIS's exemplary recording) allow Schubert's knotty rhythmic counterpoint to emerge with ideal clarity.

As an engulfing, visceral experience, the Chiaroscuro's *Death and the Maiden* ranks alongside two of my favourite versions, the Alban Berg's later recording (EMI/Warner, 3/86) and the Gramophone Award-winning Pavel Haas (Supraphon, 10/13). And its astringent 'period' sound world puts it in a category of its own. A chasm separates the *Death and the Maiden* from the 18-year-old Schubert's G minor Quartet, offered here as a digestif. Parts of the first movement and minuet sound like gawky takes on Haydn and Mozart in *Sturm und Drang* vein. Yet in a performance as bracingly immediate as this, the work has plenty of enjoyably Schubertian touches, whether in the *Andante*'s airy dance or the paprika-flavoured finale, duly relished here.

Richard Wigmore

Stravinsky

The Soldier's Tale

Didier Sandre Narrator Denis Podalydès Soldier

Michel Vuillermoz Devil Olivier Charlier vn

Members of the Orchestre de Paris /

Jean-Christophe Gayot

Harmonia Mundi ⑤ HMM90 2354 (58' • DDD)



Hard on the heels of LSO Live's austere English-language *Soldier's Tale* comes

this version in the original French from Harmonia Mundi. Both have been released to coincide with the centenary of the premiere, and the differences between them are far greater than those of language. Where LSO Live presents the work as a

chamber piece, with a single actor (Malcolm Sinclair) and the players directed from the leader's chair by Roman Simovic, Harmonia Mundi offers us something altogether more theatrical: the cast comes from the Comédie-Française; Olivier Charlier is the starry violinist; and the 'Ensemble Instrumental', its members drawn from the Orchestre de Paris, is directed by Jean-Christophe Gayot, better known, perhaps, as an oboist than as a conductor.

As one might expect, it's superbly acted, though the use of three speakers also throws into relief the stature of Sinclair's achievement in tackling the work on his own. Didier Sandre is the worldly wise Narrator, observing and participating in the tale he is telling with bitter irony. Michel Vuillermoz makes a seductive, insidious Devil, though the great performance comes from Denis Podalydès's beautifully realised Soldier, touching, naive and prone to both genuine sorrow and self-pity when his schemes come awry. The text has been expanded to include paraphrases of the stage directions, which is fair enough since the narrative can blur without them. They're occasionally spoken, however, over music that Stravinsky intended to stand alone, and they get in

the way when Sandre describes the Princess rising from her bed over the first of the dances to which the Soldier wakes her.

Where Simovic and Sinclair steer the work towards the sombre parables of Brechtian theatre, Gayot, elegant and witty, gives us something closer to cabaret. The playing is dexterous, svelte, at times flamboyant. Bruno Tomba, in particular, dazzles with his cornet solos in the 'Marche royale' and Charlier can be utterly beguiling in an interpretation that treats the violinist more as concertante soloist than ensemble player. Stravinsky, of course, intended the work to be conducted, but a successful chamber performance can yield dividends in terms of focus and concentration, and Simovic, whose players lose nothing in comparison to their Parisian counterparts in terms of virtuosity, has the more finely integrated ensemble. Among French-language versions, Shlomo Mintz's performance – also directed from the leader's chair and comparably sharp in its focus and bite – is still marginally to be preferred to this new recording, enjoyable though it is.

Tim Ashley

Selected comparisons:

G & G Depardieu, Mintz (6/97) (NAIV) V3571

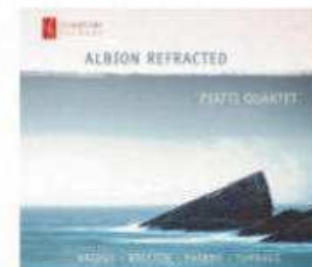
Sinclair, LSO Chbr Ens, Simovic (A/18) (LSO) LSO5074

'Albion Refracted'

Bridge Three Idylls **Britten** Three Divertimenti
Phibbs String Quartet No 1 **Turnage** Twisted
Blues with Twisted Ballad

Piatti Quartet

Champs Hill © CHRCD145 (71' • DDD)



I believe this is the Piatti Quartet's first full 'unaccompanied'

release. They collaborated with Gottlieb Wallisch on a disc of Mozart piano concerto arrangements (Linn, 8/13), and were among the various ensembles who contributed to Champs Hill's survey of Mendelssohn's complete quartet music (8/14). Here, they offer an illuminating recital of British works, including two recorded premieres.

Both trios of pre-war miniatures by Bridge and Britten are superbly done. The Piatti demonstrate their acute sensitivity to mood and texture right from the first of Bridge's *Idylls*. After the deeply melancholy start, with its delicate surges of passion, note the glints of tonal metal in their incisive chords at 2'40", the sensual shudders at 3'17", and their delicate, dewy tremolando at 4'06".

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NEW WORLDS

Themes of migration and crossing borders are as hot topics today as they ever were. This excellent recording explores two works written in the so-called "New World" by composers, Dvořák and Sokolovic, from the "Old World". Inspiring!



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THE NEW QUIET

Liam Cagney explores new music by four composers who focus on quietness in ways that allow distinctive musical perspectives to emerge



Ex Novo Ensemble play Coluccino with intense concentration

We're used to hearing about contemporary music's plurality. In the 2000s, though, common ground has emerged in the probing of quietness. Whether this cross-party appeal to quietness is a response to the daily noise of our media environment or simply a strategy for freeing sounds from historical over-familiarity, it has given us some compelling music.

Oswaldo Coluccino, in describing the character of his chamber series *Emblema*, suggests an analogy with the early Renaissance painter Piero della Francesca and his portrait of Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta. That kinship is not just in the well-defined forms, the compositional balance, the open spaces and the simplicity of colour; it is also in the 'pervading dirty white' the painting's aged surface has acquired over time. In *Emblema* one listens not only to the post-tonal pitches but to the pressure of bow on string, the breath inside the flute – the flecked surface of the auditory canvas.

The flute and violin of *Emblema 3* are so tentative as to be barely there, long silences separating their slim shards of

pitch and colour. In *Emblema 1*, registral width (high violin with low bass clarinet) combines with heterophony to generate a compelling micro-drama. The lack of activity makes even the slightest movement stand out vividly; due to such restraint, when towards the end of *Emblema 1* we hear the shrill crack of a clarinet multiphonic, it is even more intense than usual. At times the late music of Coluccino's fellow countryman Luigi Nono comes to mind in this ascetism and near-mysticism. Ex Novo Ensemble give performances of intense concentration and striking nuance. I'm not sure I knew so many gradations of quietness existed.

Among the recent releases on Another Timbre, a label specialising in quiet contemporary music, are **Linda Catlin Smith's** disc 'Wanderer' and **Cassandra Miller's** disc 'O Zomer!', each part of the label's Canadian Composers series. Opening Smith's disc, *Morning Glory* is, like the Coluccino, still and meditative but uses a mostly tonal vocabulary. In the slow repetition of a broken piano chord, interacting with parallel vibraphone and high string harmonics, there are echoes of Feldman. But the music very much

has its own voice. This is composing in the etymological sense: gently presenting a delicate sound figure (a clarinet duo tracing a simple melody in high tessitura), then gently presenting another sound figure (languorous low cello strokes), then withdrawing to see what emerges from their interaction. The mood is wistful yet quietly excited. This is the generation of the unforeseen by way of the seemingly familiar.

In *Stare at the River*, when the texture of light strings and wind polyphony is joined by rhythmically irregular piano chords, the result is like paint being splashed on to a canvas. Eastern gongs create an air less exotic than displaced; we no longer know where we are, and what seemed sure ebbs away as we try to grasp it. Echoes of tradition aren't absent, whether in *Sarabande's* harpsichord part or in *Wanderer's* gnarled brambles of violin and cello. Apartment House as usual give committed performances.

Contemporary instrumental music of this type, through its focus on slight shifts in repeated patterns, at times resembles electronic music. This is the case in *O Zomer!*, the title-track of **Cassandra Miller's** disc. A simple antiphonal gesture is repeated ad nauseum: marimba playing eight quavers sounding a minor third interval followed by unison scordatura cello and double bass answering on the key centre's fifth scale degree. Miller alters the motif's tempo, speeding it up and slowing it down, and eventually the motif explodes into an ensemble *tutti* replete with ringing crotals.

It's in her *Duet for Cello and Orchestra*, however, that Miller really knocks it out of the park – surely one of the best concertante works of the past decade. Commissioned by Ilan Volkov for the BBC SSO and composed for the cellist Charles Curtis (known for his work with Eliane Radigue and La Monte Young), *Duet* transposes Miller's meticulous eye for detail to the largest canvas. The solo part is brazenly simple, almost entirely comprising a vibrato-free perfect fifth interval (G then D) slowly repeated. This pendular perfect fifth is the bedrock for the orchestra's sporadic entries: initially brass on its own, then gradually more and more of the orchestra. In an oblique way it's a cousin of Ives's *The Unanswered Question*: the ground, the figures, the transcendental in the everyday, the orchestra becoming a dizzying sky

of mystery. As they say, though, comparisons are odious, and if I reach for them it's only to give the reader a signpost. The music is marvellously distinct: a meditation, a respiration, a mantra.

Similarly contemplative is **James Tenney's** music, which, although not contemporary, is still finding its way to the listening public (not least by New World's good work). One of America's most under-appreciated 20th-century composers, Tenney innovated his own brand of spectral music far away from the young Parisians such as Murail and Grisey – though they did have common influences in Risset and Varèse, whom Tenney met at Bell Labs in the 1960s. The rich drama of Tenney's music arises less from quietness than from a related bracketing-out of all features other than the acoustical processes in which he's interested.

The second of the *Two Koans and a Canon* (1982), from a performance point of view, is a tremolo across the violin's strings sounding an interval which alters in harmonic character across the octave gamut; sounding at times like a microtonal Philip Glass, it makes for an exhilarating trip. The longest work here, *Voice(s)* (1984) deploys four tape delay machines alongside microtonal strings and winds to create a stunningly beautiful drifting texture, whose trajectory takes us from harmonic simplicity to harmonic complexity. Great restraint is shown in not adding anything extraneous to the music and instead just letting the smooth harmonic surface determine its own content. As with much of the music on these discs, it's a work in which to lose yourself and your sense of time. **G**

THE RECORDINGS



Coluccino *Emblema*

Ex Novo Ensemble

Kairos (P) 0015049KAI



LC Smith *Wanderer*

Apartment House

Another Timbre (P) AT130



C Miller *O Zomer!*

Various artists

Another Timbre (P) AT126



Tenney *Harmonium*

Scordatura Ensemble

New World (P) NW80803-2

They positively bristle in the deconstructed March of Britten's *Divertimenti*, strutting as much in quiet music as in the more extroverted sections.

The slow-moving, widely spaced harmonies in the first movement of Joseph Phibbs's *First Quartet* (2014) suggest both intimacy and vast expanse. Shadowy figures creep in near the end as the music becomes eerily nocturnal, setting the stage for the solo viola's plaintive 'canto' at the beginning of the second movement. This chant-like melody becomes something of an *idée fixe*, returning again twice in various guises. Indeed, the work's five movements flow together, creating coherence and – to my ears – a compelling narrative trajectory. Phibbs's language is relatively traditional but idiosyncratic, and his score abounds with harmonic and colouristic subtleties. I was particularly charmed by the pizzicato writing at the opening of the third movement, which put me in mind of Malian kora music.

Mark-Anthony Turnage's *Twisted Blues with Twisted Ballad* (2008) was written for and premiered by the Belcea Quartet but the Piatti nabbed the recording premiere. Its outer movements were inspired by a pair of Led Zeppelin hits. 'Dazed and confused' works quite naturally for the first movement, with its passacaglia-like descending bass line. And I was enormously grateful that Turnage transforms the theme of 'Stairway to heaven' so artfully in the third; the song was utterly inescapable in my youth and I normally cringe when I hear it. Here, it's treated the way Bartók would a folk song, and in fact the Hungarian composer's influence looms large. But the heart of the piece is the middle movement, a memorial to Fausto Moroni, Hans Werner Henze's life partner and one of Turnage's teachers. Bleak and ritualistic, with percussive knocking on the bodies of the instruments, it's grief-stricken without being self-pitying. As with the other works on the programme, the Piatti play it with absolute authority and conviction. A most enterprising and rewarding programme.

Andrew Farach-Colton

'Resurrection'

Dessner *Réponse* Lutosławski

Lutosławski *Funeral Music* Whitley *Autumn*

Songs Woolrich *Ulysses Awakes*

12 Ensemble

Sancho Panza (P) SPAN001 (59' • DDD)



String ensembles are hardly a new venture, yet 12 Ensemble already have a

distinctive profile in terms of their spare sound (no textural 'padding' here) and the repertoire most suited to it.

The disc gets off to an uncompromising start with Lutosławski's *Musique funèbre* (1958), its unanimity of attack and minimal vibrato denoting a tensile response that yet feels constricted in a stealthily cumulative central section whose climax really needs a larger body of strings to do justice to its wrenching dissonance. That the Polish composer remains a potent influence is evident in *Réponse Lutosławski* (2014) by Bryce Dessner – the sometime guitarist of The National, already with a notable orchestral disc to his name (DG, 5/14), focusing on salient aspects of his predecessor's idiom in a (too?) substantial five-movement piece that only fully convinces in the inward poise of its 'Preludio' and crepuscular textures of 'Warsaw Canon'.

Most memorable are those pieces in between. Simon Rowland-Jones (no mean composer in his own right) is the eloquent soloist in *Ulysses Awakes* (1984), John Woolrich's thoughtful recasting of an aria from Monteverdi's opera with the vocal line sounding the more plangent on viola against a haunting backdrop of strings. Taking its cue from a deceptively restrained poem by Paul Verlaine, Kate Whitley's *Autumn Songs* (2014) duly reaffirms the favourable impression of her 'portrait' disc (NMC, 5/17) – its coruscating skeins of sound taking on an ethereal rapture before resuming their emotionally impervious course during the final bars.

12 Ensemble render the entire programme with fearless resolve, abetted by the immediate sound balance, while principal cellist Max Ruisi contributes succinctly informative notes. An impressive debut, then; were this group to take on some extra 'guest' players, a coupling of Lutosławski's *Preludes and Fugue* with Nicholas Maw's *Life Studies* is there for the making.

Richard Whitehouse

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Julius Katchen

Jed Distler pays tribute to the American pianist who was renowned for his assured, big pianism and his daring recordings of Brahms – but who tragically died aged 42

Born in Long Branch, New Jersey, on August 15, 1926, Julius Katchen was an outlier among the outstanding American pianists to emerge on the international scene after the Second World War. In many respects, his full-bodied pianism contrasted with the more literally orientated, anti-sensual approach generally favoured by his contemporaries. At the same time, his erudition extended beyond music, from his youthful studies in philosophy and English literature to his avid and canny pursuit of fine Japanese netsuke.

Pianist Earl Wild defined ‘big piano playing’ as the ability to let go in performance and to not worry about making the precise ritardando or

crescendo – to play the music in a grand style that is not hampered by anything pedantic. You hear this time and again throughout Katchen’s discography. His Schubert *Wanderer* Fantasy is one of the most robust on record, and anything but square. Listen, too, for the exuberant temperament, surreal rubatos, demented inner voices and caffeine-fuelled fast movements throughout his Schumann *Carnaval*. By contrast, his Chopin Polonaise in A flat matches Rubinstein’s, Horowitz’s and Lhévinne’s for sheer ardency and swagger.

Perhaps Katchen’s confident and assured demeanour resulted from having worked with such an exacting and demanding taskmaster as David Saperton, whose students also included Bolet, Cherkassky and Abbey Simon. As such, Katchen acquired an all-encompassing technique that knew no difficulties (Balakirev’s *Islamey* and the notorious octave passages in Liszt’s B minor Sonata were child’s play for him), abetted by a colourful and penetrating sonority that

was always clearly projected, no matter how large or unwieldy the venue. A concert-hall ambience and judicious soloist–orchestra balance especially enhances the vivid impact of the pianist’s swashbuckling 1958 studio recording of Rachmaninov’s Piano Concerto No 2, which is further graced by Sir Georg Solti’s scintillatingly contoured orchestral framework.

Katchen’s big pianism extended to his programme concepts. He relished marathon evenings and multiconcert cycles that harkened back to the respective heydays of Busoni, Petri and Arrau, and to what Richter and Rubinstein would have

served up at New York’s Carnegie Hall. Katchen thought nothing of presenting three demanding concertos in a single programme at London’s Royal Festival Hall, or of offering the entire Beethoven *Appassionata* as an encore following a programme given over to that composer’s *Diabelli* Variations and Schubert’s epic Sonata in B flat, D960.

Yet among these epic undertakings, Katchen’s traversal of Brahms’s complete solo piano works in four lengthy London recitals may have been the most meaningful and fulfilling. He nearly always managed to reconcile this composer’s intellectual and structural rigour with the music’s underlying lyrical impulses and sometimes underrated pockets of humour. In Brahms, Katchen’s propensity for daring was a double-edged sword, as cogently borne out in Concerto No 2 in B flat. His muted restraint in the slow movement’s long chains of trills defines the untranslatable Spanish word *duende*. Conversely, in the finale, at the coda’s outset, listen to Katchen start the right-hand octaves at

DEFINING MOMENTS

•1937 – *Early concerts*

On October 21, the 11-year-old Katchen plays Mozart’s D minor Concerto with Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra. He repeats the piece on November 22 with Sir John Barbirolli and the New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra at Carnegie Hall, New York, earning critical praise.

•1946 – *Formative years*

Katchen graduates first in his class from Haverford College, and is awarded a fellowship by the French government for his academic achievement. He signs an exclusive contract with Decca, and represents the United States at the first international Unesco festival, followed by extensive touring. For professional reasons, Katchen adopts Paris as his permanent home base.

•1949 – *First long-playing disc*

With the changeover from 78rpm discs to long-playing technology under way, Katchen’s recording of Brahms’s Sonata No 3 in F minor, Op 5, is released as Decca’s first solo piano LP.

•1962 – *Outspokenness*

While on tour in East Germany, Katchen publicly condemns the Berlin Wall. Russian officials declare his comments defamatory, and forbid Aram Khachaturian from recording his Piano Concerto with him as soloist at a scheduled session with the Vienna Philharmonic.

•1964 – *Brahms cycle in London*

Between April 12 and 22, Katchen surveys Brahms’s complete works for piano solo over the course of four recitals at Wigmore Hall.

•1968 – *Rock and Roll Circus*

On December 11, Katchen is recorded to appear on a TV special *The Rolling Stones Rock and Roll Circus*. He is to die a few months later, on April 29, and although the programme is not aired at the scheduled time, it is released in complete form on DVD in 2004.

•2005-06 – *Posthumous netsuke sale*

Sotheby’s sells pieces from the Julius and Arlette Katchen netsuke collection at auction for a huge sum. Further pieces fetch another significant sum a decade later at Bonhams.



a deliberate trot, while he slyly speeds up to a devilish sprint towards the finish. It's not what Brahms wrote, yet it works, and one could imagine the composer winking in approval.

Nor was Katchen averse to the occasional crossover dalliance, although he was anything but a populist on the scale of Van Cliburn or Lang Lang. His debonair solo work in Gershwin's Piano Concerto and *Rhapsody in Blue* distances itself from easy-listening luminary Mantovani's oleaginous orchestral backing. And while his affinity with Classical repertoire seemed to be more acquired than innate (I jokingly refer to his overly facile Beethoven Op 120 as the 'Oscar Peterson *Diabelli* Variations'), he fervently if selectively embraced 20th-century fare; Britten specifically requested him for his recording of the *Diversions* for piano left hand and orchestra. Katchen first

recorded Bartók's Third Concerto when the work was relatively new (eight years old), and collaborated dazzlingly in Stravinsky's *Petrushka* with Monteux, who famously led its 1911 premiere. The pianist's vivacious and crisp Prokofiev Third from his last recording session belies any notion of terminal illness (he was to die from cancer in April 1969). I once wrote in a comparative review that in the Prokofiev, 'The Argerich version smokes. But Katchen's inhales!'

Katchen made the pioneering and still unsurpassed recording of Ned Rorem's Second Piano Sonata. The composer admired the interpretation as well as his friend's prodigious capacity for both work and play: 'I remember him going on tour without his music,' recalled Rorem. 'But not because it was all photographed in his brain: it was photographed in his fingers.' 

THE ESSENTIAL RECORDING



Brahms Piano Sonata No 1 in C
Decca

This relatively unpopular sonata may seem a surprising choice from a great Brahms cycle. But Katchen basks in the music's energetic ambition, and glides through unwieldy textures and problematic spots with a combination of virtuosic point and orchestrally inspired mass.

Instrumental



Harriet Smith hears a Romantic recital by William YOUN:

'He plays Schumann's Humoreske with absolute conviction, combining surging joy with poetic inwardness' ► [REVIEW ON PAGE 70](#)



Philip Kennicott listens to English virginal music from Mahan Esfahani:

'He follows Byrd's Ut, re, mi, fa, sol, la – a giant in the literature – with a Scottish Gigg, and the juxtaposition is delicious' ► [REVIEW ON PAGE 73](#)

JS Bach

Aria variata (alla maniera italiana), BWV989. Cantata No 54 – 'Widerstehe doch der Sünde' (transcr Ólafsson). Concerto, BWV974. Fantasia and Fugue, BWV904. Ich ruf zu dir Herr Jesu Christ, BWV639 (transcr Busoni). Inventions – No 12, BWV783; No 15, BWV786. Nun freut euch, lieben Christen g'mein, BWV734 (transcr Kempff). Nun komm der Heiden Heiland, BWV659 (transcr Busoni). Organ Sonata No 4, BWV528 – Adagio (transcr Stradal). Prelude, BWV902. Preludes and Fugues – BWV847; BWV850; BWV855; BWV855a (transcr Siloti). Sinfonias – No 12, BWV798; No 15, BWV801. Solo Violin Partita No 3, BWV1006 – Gavotte (transcr Rachmaninov)

Víkingur Ólafsson *pf*

DG © 483 5022GH (77' • DDD)



Not exactly being a fan of Philip Glass's music, this is the first time I've encountered

Víkingur Ólafsson on disc, though I was very taken with his Bach in concert last year. That impression is deepened by this disc: here is an artist who palpably adores and reveres JSB in equal measure, and makes sense of a programme that could have sounded bitty – 35 tracks, with the biggest work being the youthful *Aria variata (alla maniera italiana)*.

In terms of pianistic lineage, Ólafsson combines the fantasy of Maria João Pires and Martha Argerich with the contrapuntal élan of Piotr Anderszewski. But he is very much his own man, mixing original Bach with transcriptions that range from Stradal, Busoni and Rachmaninov via Kempff to the present day, with Ólafsson's own rethinking of the luscious aria from the solo alto Cantata No 54, 'Widerstehe doch der Sünde', in which he channels the great transcribers of old, using left-hand octaves to give it a grounded feeling, and choosing a measured tempo more akin to Alfred Deller than Andreas Scholl.

Ólafsson's notes tell of his discovery of Bach pianists as different as Edwin Fischer,

Rosalyn Tureck, Dinu Lipatti, Glenn Gould and Martha Argerich. From this, he has found his own way with Bach – highly individual but never mannered. His account of Kempff's transcription of the chorale prelude *Nun freut euch* is less anchored by the chorale tune itself and more flighty in effect than Kempff's own performances (Eloquence). I like the way that Ólafsson alternates original Bach with the transcriptions, so that Stradal's take on the middle movement of Bach's Fourth Organ Sonata (given here with generous use of sustaining pedal to create a poetic ambience) is followed by a refreshingly airborne account of the D major Prelude from Book 1 of *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, while its Fugue melds clarity with nobility. After this comes the Busoni version of another chorale prelude, *Nun komm der Heiden Heiland*, which unfolds more naturally than in Demidenko's hands (Hyperion). We then get another dash of cold water in the C minor Prelude and Fugue from Book 1. The Prelude is judged to perfection, combining energy and brilliance, the Fugue a model of crisp detail.

And so it continues: almost as if Ólafsson is offering different angles on the statue of Bach that he keeps by his piano – one that 'looks like wisdom incarnate, stern-faced and majestic in its wig'. He brings considerable character to the theme of the *Aria variata*, tending to choose faster tempos than Angela Hewitt (Hyperion, 10/04), to thrilling effect in Variations 2, 7 and 9, while Var 6 has a limpid beauty. Even an outwardly simple piece such as the A major Invention, BWV783, is full of interest, the energy infectious joyous, the trills razor-sharp.

Other highlights include the Bach/Rachmaninov Gavotte from the E major Violin Partita, which here has an engaging nonchalance, and the Siloti reworking of the E minor Prelude from Book 1 of the *WTC*, a model of restraint in which Ólafsson allows the music's beauty to shine through. If the first movement of the Harpsichord Concerto in D minor (Bach's arrangement of Marcello's D minor Oboe

Concerto) is almost too punchy in its ebullience, the famous *Adagio* is suitably haloed and the finale fizzles. He ends his journey with the A minor Fantasia and Fugue, BWV904, which again is unerring in its sense of build, the closing bars of the Fugue making a fittingly grandiose conclusion to the disc.

DG's engineers have done this remarkable musician proud. I can't wait to hear what he does next. **Harriet Smith**

JS Bach

Four Duets, BWV802-805. Fantasia and Fugue, BWV542. Partita diverse sopra 'Ach, was soll ich Sünder machen', BWV770. Preludes and Fugues – BWV539; BWV547; BWV552. Von Gott will ich nicht lassen, BWV658

Philip Rushforth *org*

Priory © PRCD1198 (77' • DDD)

Played on the organ of Chester Cathedral

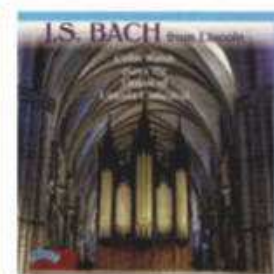
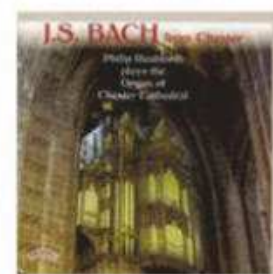
JS Bach

Das alte Jahr vergangen ist, BWV614. Fantasia and Fugue, BWV542. In dir ist Freude, BWV615. Liebster Jesu, wir sind hier – BWV634; BWV731. Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland – BWV659; BWV660; BWV661. Passacaglia and Fugue, BWV582. Toccata and Fugue, 'Dorian', BWV538. Wir glauben all' an einen Gott, BWV680; BWV740

Colin Walsh *org*

Priory © PRCD1203 (74' • DDD)

Played on the organ of Lincoln Cathedral



In some quarters it has now become distinctly unfashionable to even consider recording Bach's organ music on instruments which don't have the requisite, 'historically correct' Baroque credentials of tracker action, light wind pressures, unequal temperaments and the like. The thought of recording complete Bach recitals on Romantic British cathedral instruments is simply anathema to the



Individual but never mannered: Víkingur Ólafsson balances noble beauty and infectious energy in Bach

purist. I can only hope that this short-sighted point of view will not prevent Bach lovers from exploring the first two volumes of Priory's new Bach series, the antidote, if you like, to David Goode's superb ongoing Bach series on the Metzler organ in the chapel of Trinity College Cambridge for Signum.

Chester Cathedral's Gray and Davidson/Whiteley/Hill organ is a substantial mid-19th-century instrument with a slightly larger stop list than Lincoln's 1898 Father Willis. Philip Rushworth at Chester favours fairly plain colours for much of his programme. His playing is clean, solid and smooth, with steady and appropriate tempo choices and some lovely light touches, as for example in the opening Prelude in D minor, BWV539, which he gives to a floating, gently wavering flute. The brighter stops are used effectively in the Partita on *Ach, was soll ich Sünder machen* (BWV770), while the full heft of the *tutti* choruses packs a mighty punch at the end of a massive build-up in the closing bars of the *St Anne* Fugue in E flat, complete with 32ft reed.

Both players know their respective instruments better than anyone alive and it is interesting to compare their respective interpretations of the Fantasia and Fugue in G minor (BWV542), the only piece common to both discs. Colin Walsh takes only a few seconds longer than Rushworth,

yet his interpretation accentuates much more the architectural edges of this outstandingly original work, with a much stronger sense of the flamboyant in his phrasing and projection of Bach's melodic lines. Walsh also scores highly for his imaginative sequence of chorale preludes, especially the three treatments of *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, thereby creating a very effective 'new' partita. His disc concludes with the mighty Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor, BWV582. With the skill of an experienced pilot he gently allows this great leviathan to slip her moorings and to creep out on a contrapuntal odyssey over the Lincolnshire fens. This is Bach-playing of the highest order – and a glorious conclusion to one of the finest Bach organ recordings in recent years. **Malcolm Riley**

Chopin

Four Ballades. Nocturnes – No 4, Op 15 No 1; No 13, Op 48 No 1; No 17, Op 62 No 1

Leif Ove Andsnes *pf*

Sony Classical © 19075 82293-2 (51' • DDD)



The Andsnes brand comes with a number of cast-iron guarantees: superior

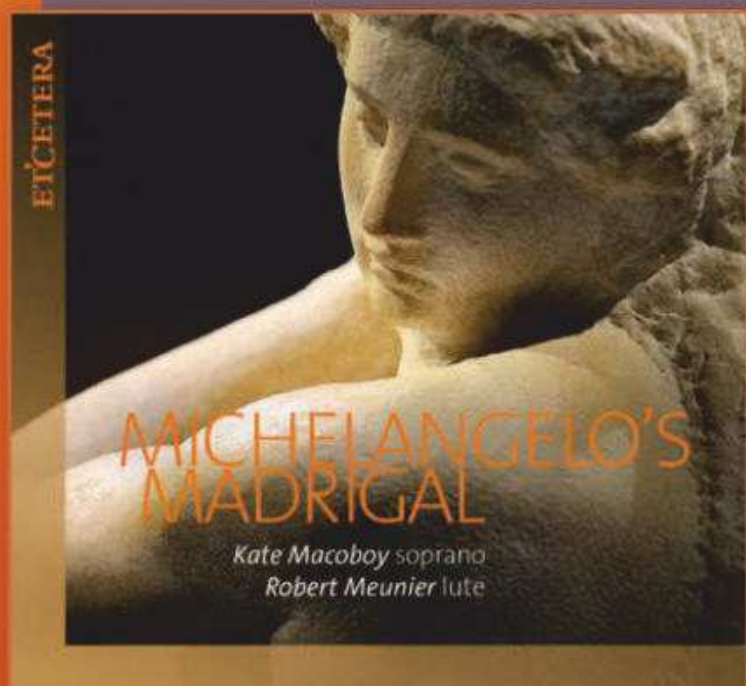
clarity, strength and facility without showing off, superb grasp of architecture, finely judged transitions and no suspicion of exaggeration at either end of the dramatic-poetic spectrum. Drop in at any point in his Ballades and Nocturnes and you cannot but admire the control and firmness of touch.

But is that enough? Puzzlement begins with the first few pages of the G minor Ballade, which are lacking in variety, both of touch and of timing. When the poetic moments arrive they feel ungenerous, at times even perfunctory, and when abandon and virtuosity are called for – as in the codas of the F major and F minor Ballades – they are tempered by curious circumspection. Was this just an off-day or two in the studio? Perhaps so, because the Nocturnes are equally stiff, even predictable.

Perhaps I can best describe the effect as that of an artist laying down perfectly accurate tracks as a safety net, in case the 'real' performances to come should need patching. Certainly there are no moments to make you hold your breath, such as Stephen Hough's withdrawals into near-silence as Chopin turns the page on to some revelation even more wonderful than the one before. Perahia strikes an even finer balance between head and heart, as does Rubinstein in the A flat and F minor

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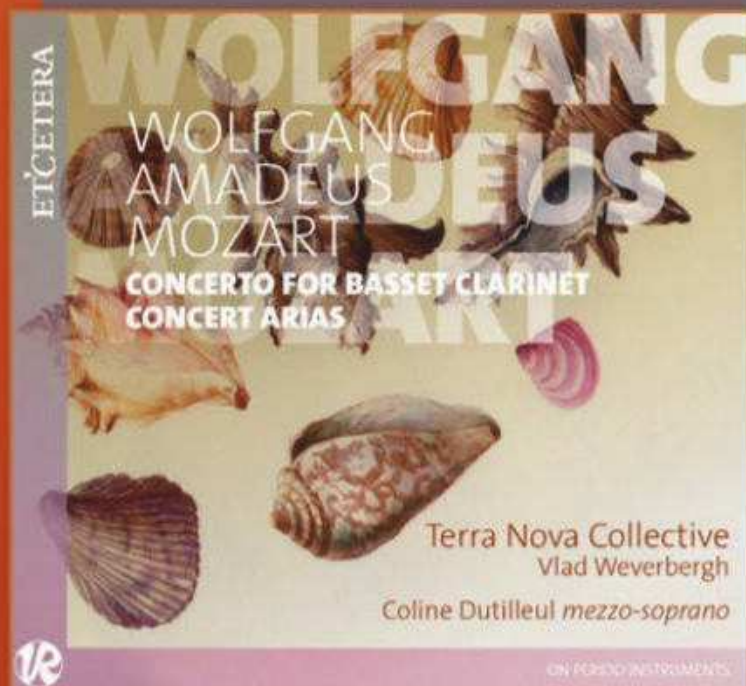
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Ballades, while Cherkassky conjures more magic than anyone in those same two pieces.

As for the others in my comparative listening, Kissin is also a more pliant and sensitive exponent than Andsnes, but he tends to linger to the point of self-consciousness and the RCA recording is unbearably harsh and metallic; to be frank, his was the only disc on my list I simply couldn't get through. At the other extreme, Lubimov's 1837 Erard tinkles attractively in *pianissimo* and gives an impression of the kind of sound Chopin would have heard; overall, though, the textures feel more constrained than liberated.

The intervening Nocturnes are well chosen by Andsnes to set off the Ballades, and normally I wouldn't baulk at having less than 52 minutes of music on the disc. But on this occasion I would think hard before parting with my money and save it for Perahia and Cherkassky. **David Fanning**

Ballades – selected comparisons:

Lubimov (7/93) (ERAT) 2292 45990-2

Perahia (12/94^R) (SONY) 88843 06243-2

Kissin (6/99) (RCA) 09026 63259-2

Hough (5/04) (HYPER) CDA67456

Ballades Nos 3 and 4 – selected comparisons:

Rubinstein (9/60^R, 10/96) (PHIL) 456 955-2PB2

Cherkassky (5/01) (BBCL) BBCL4057-2

Chopin

'Preludes to Chopin'

Barcarolle, Op 60. Mes joies (arr Liszt). Piano Sonatas – No 2, Op 35; No 3, Op 58. Preludes, Op 28 – No 7, No 13; No 14; No 17. Polonaise No 6, Op 53 (arr Busoni). Prelude, Op 45

Kenneth Hamilton *pf*

Prima Facie © PFCDO84 (75' • DDD)



In his booklet notes, Kenneth Hamilton expresses a deep-rooted interest in Romantic

performance traditions that purport to inform his Chopin interpretations. In the A flat Polonaise, for example, he appropriates characteristics of Ferruccio Busoni's piano roll recording while incorporating textual variants that Liszt pupil Bernhard Stavenhagen set down in a piano roll of the Chopin/Liszt *My Joys*. He cites Paderewski as the impetus behind the sundry arpeggiations, untogether hands and octave transpositions in the Funeral March of the Second Sonata. And so on.

While Hamilton talks the scholarly talk, his pianism doesn't always walk the walk, so to speak. His triplet chords in the second subject of the same sonata's first movement are heavy and laboured. The first theme's

relentless left-hand accompaniment becomes more rhythmically slack as it progresses. Hamilton's notey and unsupple Scherzo in the Third Sonata Scherzo never takes wing. His articulation in the Second's enigmatic unison finale is vague to say the least. And what insistent, pounded-out down-beats throughout the main theme of the Third Sonata's finale.

Hamilton's Barcarolle blurs the line between understated and underplayed, and suffers from a perfunctory reading of the sublime coda that misses all of the opportunities for melodic and harmonic pointing that Arthur Rubinstein aristocratically savoured. While the A flat Polonaise's Trio builds with excitement (with no small help from Busoni!), and the G major episode prior to the principal theme's recapitulation is sensitively shaped, Hamilton's hectic sense of rhythm lacks the idiom's requisite swagger.

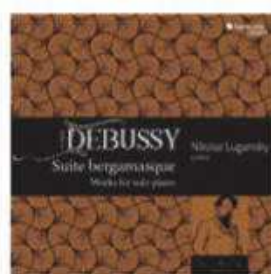
The Prelude selections are equally problematic. The F sharp major's active middle voice flickers in and out of focus, buried in a fog of pedal. The E flat minor is a mad rush of notes bunching together like crowded rush-hour metro standees, while the A flat sounds choppy and lyrically constipated. But Hamilton's fleet and offhandedly spun C sharp minor Op 45 Prelude realises the pianist's improvisatory conception perfectly, proving a viable antipode to the relatively Brahmsian deliberation of Arrau or Michelangeli. And in the Third Sonata's *Largo*, listeners will welcome Hamilton's intimately scaled animation over today's fashionably slow crawls (Lang Lang, most notoriously). On the whole, though, Hamilton's aspirations in the direction of his golden-age heroes exemplify mind over reality. **Jed Distler**

Debussy

Deux Arabesques. Hommage à Haydn. Images, Book II – Cloches à travers les feuilles; Et la lune descend sur le temple qui fut; Poissons d'or. L'isle joyeuse. Estampes – Jardins sous la pluie. La plus que lent. Suite bergamasque

Nikolai Lugansky *pf*

Harmonia Mundi © HMM90 2309 (54' • DDD)



Finally the perfect illustration of what my Ukrainian teacher used to require for playing quiet passages: as if walking through water without disturbing it. Curiously, similar imagery – of herons floating over the Florida Everglades – features in the *Clair de lune* sequence of Disney's *Fantasia* which didn't make

it to the final cut. Far from being a mere incidental bonus, Lugansky's *Suite bergamasque*, its mercurial nostalgia for the past perfectly captured, is the crown jewel of the disc, a real tour de force of poetic pianism and worthy of lending its title to the recital as a whole.

Lugansky finds ways to ravish the ear without ever letting us settle into monotony (a criticism to which Jean-Yves Thibaudet, for one, is open). Dreamlike and hypnotic, his accounts of some of Debussy's greatest piano hits never deviates into the over-indulgent, effete or simpering. From the porcelain-like fragility of 'Et la lune descend sur le temple qui fut', to the energetic yet pristine clarity and spontaneity of *L'isle joyeuse*, to the intoxicating and lush sensuality of *La plus que lente*, his 'déguisements fantasques' (as Verlaine put it in his 'Clair de lune' poem) are exquisitely judged.

Beneath the shimmering surface colours, Lugansky is alive to structural clarity without ever becoming impersonal or matter-of-fact: a danger Angela Hewitt does not avoid (Hyperion, 11/12). In this vein, and given the nonchalant simplicity he brings to the most complex harmonies and textures, he can stand comparison with Gieseking (EMI), even if no one has quite matched the latter's magical affinity with Debussy (take, for example, the muffled opening of 'Jardins sous la pluie', where Lugansky is a touch too real).

As with previous anniversary-year Debussy instalments from Harmonia Mundi, the sound quality is flawless.

Michelle Assay

Glass

'Motion Picture'

The Hours. Dracula (both arr Riesman)

Maki Namekawa *pf* **Cello Octet Amsterdam**

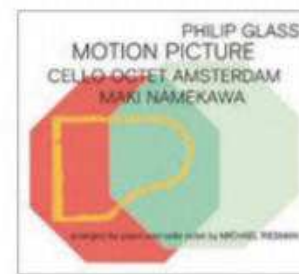
Orange Mountain © OMM0131 (54' • DDD)

Glass

Mishima

Maki Namekawa *pf*

Orange Mountain © OMM0128 (44' • DDD)



On the surface there's not a lot to distinguish between these two discs. Both feature film music by Philip Glass in arrangements by longtime collaborator Michael Riesman on the composer's own Orange Mountain label. Both also showcase the excellent Glass interpreter

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Maki Namekawa. However, both recordings display different sides to Namekawa's musical character.

On 'Motion Picture' she is joined by the impressive Cello Octet Amsterdam in a three-movement concert-style suite of Glass's soundtrack to Stephen Daldry's 2002 film *The Hours*, followed by music written by the composer to accompany Tod Browning's classic 1931 film remake of *Dracula*. Unlike the recording featuring Riesman himself with the Manitoba Chamber Orchestra and Anne Manson (7/13), there's very little by way of conflict here between soloist and accompaniment. During the opening two movements neither side seems willing to command centre stage. Cello Octet Amsterdam project a rich yet intimate tone and at times Namekawa's piano hides behind the cellos' warm sonorous glow. The tone inevitably grows more agitated during the turbulent passages that appear throughout the *Dracula* soundtrack but even here Namekawa's piano sits inside the sound – as a cog in the ensemble's wheel rather than an external mechanism driving it forward.

Glass once pointed out that *The Hours* is 'a film about how art affects life'. In the case of the controversial Japanese writer and film-maker Yukio Mishima, the reverse is true: life impinged on his art to such an extent that resolution could only be achieved through death. Mishima's final day, which leads to his suicide (or *seppuku*) bookends Paul Schrader's 1985 biopic about the novelist. In between, four episodes in the artist's life are interspersed with episodes from Mishima's childhood and scenes enacted from *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion* and *Confessions of a Mask*.

Glass's original soundtrack contained music for string orchestra and percussion to represent the present, cues for string quartet to evoke the past and incidental music for a combination of strings, electronic harp, electric guitar and synthesised sounds for the fictional scenes. Recreating such a diverse palette on a solo piano is impossible but Namekawa is clearly mindful of the need to characterise each cue accordingly. The opening, featuring bright music-box-style figures, takes an ominous turn when a scale-like pattern in the lower register snakes across the piano's middle range. Namekawa's excellent performance, combining both terraced dynamics and a kind of 'terraced articulation', stems from previous work on Glass's set of 20 Piano Études (2/15). Her ability to shape, pace and project the composer's music is most impressive during the more extended tracks, where she keeps all three elements superbly in check. **Pwyll ap Siôn**

Reicha

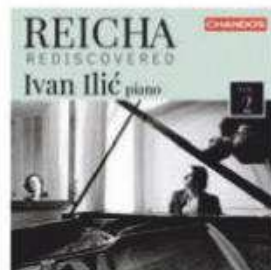
'Reicha Rediscovered, Vol 2'

Études dans le genre fugué, Op 97 – Nos 1-13.

Fugue, Op 36 No 12

Ivan Ilić *pf*

Chandos © CHAN20033 (63' • DDD)



Patrick Rucker's essential introduction to Reicha (in his review of 'Reicha

Rediscovered, Vol 1' – 11/17) emphasised his roles not only as composer but also as teacher and theorist. That inaugural disc interspersed a pair of sonatas with a sampling of some of his didactic music, including a taster of Op 97 in the form of its Introduction. The new disc immerses us in Reicha the pedagogue as it embarks on the first 13 of the 34 *Études in Fugal Style ... for the Use of Young Composers*.

Rather than simply compile an anthology of contrapuntal exercises, Reicha accompanies each with an introductory prelude-style piece, in the manner of Op 97's clear model, Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*, or Hindemith's *Ludus tonalis*. The preludes may be melancholy, as in the E minor No 1, or more effusive, as in the full-fledged (if hardly revelatory) variations of No 3. Like Bach, these preludes too become character pieces, often making use of canon, chaconne or dance rhythms. The feeling lingers, though, that Reicha is not possessed of Bach's thematic imagination, and few of them stick in the mind or provoke one to wonder at any compositional sleight of hand.

Ilić argues persuasively for the variety of fugal approaches in these pieces but, again, there is little here of the sense of wonder at Bach's ability, in the '48', to present a compendious range of fugal types and styles, despite Reicha's occasional idiosyncratic turn of harmony. Dynamic markings are sparse in the score and so too in the recording, which barely strays outside a range between *mezzo-piano* and *mezzo-forte*: a pity given the greater profile that might have been granted to the syncopated pedal points of the seventh prelude or the pecking repeated notes of the ninth fugue.

One can imagine Reicha's students – who included Berlioz, Franck, Liszt and Gounod – finding these pieces invaluable as primers for their own contrapuntal studies. Despite Ilić's zeal for this music, however, the modern listener may not find himself panting in anticipation for Nos 14-34 of these studies. **David Thresher**

D Scarlatti

Keyboard Sonatas – Kk6; Kk30; Kk69; Kk119; Kk132; Kk141; Kk162; Kk175; Kk180; Kk199; Kk208; Kk213; Kk216; Kk460; Kk481

Jean Rondeau *hpd*

Erato © 9029 56336-8; © 9029 56336-4 (81' • DDD)



It is said that soon after Domenico Scarlatti's arrival in Lisbon in November

1719, the King's younger brother recommended a 16-year-old named Carlos de Seixas as a pupil, and that it was Seixas who drew Scarlatti's attention to the music of the streets – the 'tunes sung by carriers, muleteers and common people', as he later described it – and its potential as an ingredient for art music. Subsequently it became a vitalising element, piquant and grounding, in the hundreds of brilliant keyboard sonatas by the composer whom Malcom Boyd called 'the greatest of all harpsichordists'.

Those two strains of Scarlatti's art, the vitality of assimilated folk elements and resplendent virtuosity, inform this first Scarlatti release by the French harpsichordist Jean Rondeau. Far from a chronological presentation and despite the numerical order in which they appear in the header, each of the 16 sonatas has been chosen for its intrinsic expressive qualities and structural variety. Thus the series begins with the straightforward Italianate lyricism of the *adagio* A major Sonata, Kk208, as though Rondeau wants to show us how the harpsichord is capable of making an exquisitely extended *cantabile* worthy of a great singer. Immediately following is the A minor Sonata, Kk175, where a succession of mercurial moods, from fury to exaltation, follow in breathtaking rapidity. Later we are stunned to stumble upon a scene in Kk213 of such loneliness and desolation that it can only evoke elemental grief. Further on, Kk460 summons the pageantry of a regal procession. And, yes, here too is a fresh run of Rondeau's riveting performance of the D minor Sonata, Kk141, which has logged more than 360,000 views since it was posted on YouTube five years ago.

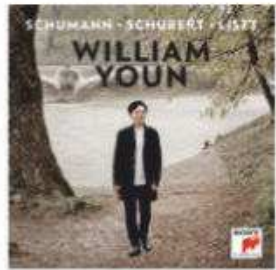
This is impassioned, eloquent Scarlatti, emanating directly from the heart, ordered and juxtaposed by an inspired artistic sensibility. Anyone in love with Scarlatti or with the sound of the harpsichord will not want to miss this. For those who've not yet heard Rondeau, either in concert or on record, I envy you the pleasure of discovery. **Patrick Rucker**

William Youn

Liszt Auf dem Wasser zu singen (Schubert), S558 No 2. Geheimes Flüstern hier und dort (C Schumann), S569 No 16. Ich hab' in deinem Auge (C Schumann), S569 No 9. Soirée de Vienne, S427 No 6. Ständchen (Schubert), S560 No 7 **Schubert** Trauerwalzer, D365 No 2. Valses sentimentales, D779 (excs) **C Schumann** Scherzo No 2, Op 14 **R Schumann** Humoreske, Op 20 **Zemlinsky** Albumblatt (Erinnerungen aus Wien)

William Youn *pf*

Sony Classical © 19075 86090-2 (68' • DDD)



I've been enjoying William Youn's way with Mozart's keyboard sonatas

and this latest recital is on a similar level. He explains the thinking behind the programme in the booklet: born in South Korea, he moved first to the USA and then to Europe aged 18, whereupon he discovered Vienna, a city that immediately fascinated him and which links all the composers on the disc.

He begins with Schumann's *Humoreske*, composed in Vienna in 1839, and captures its changeability with absolute conviction. The opening combines surging joy with moments of poetic inwardness; the second number is, in Youn's hands, slightly more urgent than Anderszewski, who instead dwells on its more quizzical qualities. If no one can quite match Lupu's gently beseeching way in the third's outer sections, Youn dispatches the torrent of notes in the fifth number with fervour and strikes the right note of ardent majesty in the sixth. Though Youn's final number is full of regret, he doesn't quite plumb the depths of Lupu or Anderszewski.

From here we move to the *gemütlich* world of Schubert's *Valses sentimentales*, Youn presenting a selection that ranges from simple charm (No 12) and longing (No 23) to unexpected vehemence (No 8); in a waltz as well known as the 13th, his experience with Mozart allows him to keep things outwardly simple, to alluring effect. In addition to pure Schubert we have his songs as viewed through the prism of Liszt the transcriber. Here modern-day pianists seem to have an inbuilt disadvantage, for few seem able to conjure the melody of a Lied such as 'Auf dem Wasser zu singen' with the glory of the pianists of yore – Bolet springs to mind, among others; Youn is sensitive but feels a little reined-in. Similarly, while there are good things in the much-recorded 'Ständchen', especially in the more inward moments, he doesn't

own it in the way the greats, from Rachmaninov down, have done.

But leaving that aside (and I mean it as a compliment to be mentioning Youn in the same breath as such giants), the Clara Schumann/Liszt transcriptions – real rarities – have a charm that is immediately engaging, with 'Geheimes Flüstern hier und dort' being particularly lovely. Clara's fiery Second Scherzo is full of dramatic panache, though I could have done with even more sense of the music driving through the bar lines in the outer sections. Youn ends with another rarity, the *Albumblatt* by Zemlinsky, to which he brings an abundant sense of yearning.

Harriet Smith

Schumann Humoreske – selected comparisons:

Lupu (4/95) (DECC) 440 496-2DH

Anderszewski (1/11^R) (VIRG/ERAT) 642022-0

Schubert/Liszt songs – selected comparisons:

Bolet (1/84^R, 7/86^R) (DECC) 467 801-2DC9

'Four Fantasies'

Beethoven Piano Sonata No 14, 'Moonlight',

Op 27 No 2 **Chopin** Fantaisie, Op 49

Schumann Fantasie, Op 17 **Scriabin** Piano

Sonata No 2, 'Sonata-Fantaisie', Op 19

Anna Fedorova *pf*

Channel Classics © CCS41318 (73' • DDD)



Brahms's Op 118 Piano Pieces (DiscAuvers, 2017) revealed Anna

Fedorova to be a sensitive and conscientious interpreter, although a tad dry and inhibited, possibly due to the drab engineering. She often makes a more robust impression with this recital of large-scale fantasies and sonata/fantasy hybrids. The opening salvo, Scriabin's two-movement *Sonata-Fantaisie* in G sharp minor takes wing in the *Presto* finale, where Fedorova keeps the swirling textures and throbbing melodic lines in gorgeous perspective, if not quite matching the sabre-tooth incisiveness of Yuja Wang's recording (DG, 8/09). She ardently basks in the first movement's declamatory qualities, yet parks the lyrical passages in neutral, so to speak, at a far remove from, say, Ashkenazy's enlivened inflections (Decca, 9/78).

According to her booklet notes, Fedorova has been playing Chopin's *Fantaisie* for years, and it shows; her excellent performance proves to be the disc's high point. The pianist's well-integrated tempo relationships between sections help to ensure a unified narrative flow, while deftly navigating the music's

emotional shifts between gravitas and abandon.

She's less successful doing so in the Schumann *Fantaisie*'s volatile first movement, where the climaxes seem abrupt and episodic rather than building up to inevitable effect. Yet her ability to juggle multiple inner voices and keep them in play impresses. Fedorova's tendency to taper the central march movement's long dotted-rhythm lines undermines the music's obsessive momentum, while the pianist sacrifices fervency for spot-on marksmanship in the treacherous coda, rendering the intended climax rather anticlimactic. However, the final movement is lovely, and, again, listeners will notice how Fedorova's strongly independent hands create a three-dimensional textural perspective.

Fedorova makes expressive points in the (in)famous *Adagio* of Beethoven's *Moonlight* Sonata through touch and emphasis, abetted by a steady yet never rigid basic tempo, and no expressive lily-gilding whatsoever. Yet her keen attention to voice-leading in the *Allegretto* is offset by studied diminuendos and other instances of overphrasing. Her *Presto* finale gets an A-plus for textual scrutiny but fails to register on the proverbial *agitato* meter, sacrificing the forest for the trees, as well as dramatic tension.

Obviously Fedorova's interpretations face decades of steep catalogue competition, yet it's gratifying to hear how this talented pianist's artistry has evolved since her previous solo release. **Jed Distler**

'Impromptus'

Chopin Three Impromptus. Fantaisie-

impromptu, Op 66 **Fauré** Six Impromptus

Scriabin Impromptus – Op 10; Op 12; Op 14.

Impromptu à la mazur, Op 2 No 3

Katya Apekisheva *pf*

Champs Hill © CHRCD135 (79' • DDD)



Taking roughly a reverse chronology, Katya Apekisheva intersperses three pairs

of Scriabin Impromptus with the six of Fauré and four of Chopin, finishing the disc with Scriabin's earliest, his *Impromptu à la mazur*. The 80-minute ceiling leaves her just short of presenting all Scriabin's contributions, depriving us of the two *à la mazur* in Op 7. In compensation, throughout the programme, Apekisheva is responsive to the unscripted and spontaneous nature of the genre, while maintaining seamless phrasing and flawless tonal control.

According to her foreword to the booklet, the disc was inspired by her interest in Fauré's music in general and his Impromptus in particular. However, it is Scriabin's idiom that comes across as closest to her instincts. Hear her weaving of the exquisite tapestry of Op 14 No 2, for example, against which she sets his sorrowful reflections with tasteful pedalling and perfumed textures. True, her rubato is on the indulgent side. Compared to Sofronitsky's noble rendition of Op 12 No 2 (Vista Vera, etc), which is about as close as we can get to a historical authority, Apekisheva is drawn more towards surface beauty than to the heart of darkness. Similarly, while her avowed affinity with Fauré is evident in her mercurial poetry, it is Germaine Thyssens-Valentin who finds the nuanced dark undertones that distance these pieces more definitively from salon music.

Apekisheva's Chopin offers some charming reminders of Scriabin's early obsession, and though Murray Perahia is surely better attuned temperamentally to the *Allegro assai quasi presto* of the first Impromptu, for instance, the fact that she invites such elevated comparisons itself indicates the high order of her pianism. Recording quality is good, though the

acoustic does not comfortably absorb the forcefulness of some of the *fortissimos*.

Michelle Assay

Fauré – selected comparison:

Thyssens-Valentin (8/02) (TEST) SBT1263

Chopin – selected comparison:

Perahia (12/85^R, 11/14) (SONY) 88843 06243-2

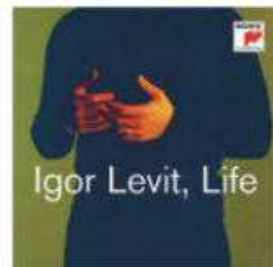
'Life'

JS Bach Solo Violin Partita No 2, BWV1004 – Chaconne (transcr Brahms) **Busoni** Berceuse, K249 No 7. Fantasia after JS Bach, K253 **B Evans** Peace Piece **Liszt** Fantasia and Fugue on 'Ad nos, ad salutarem undam', S259 (arr Busoni). **Isoldens** Liebestod (Wagner), S447. Solemn March to the Holy Grail from Parsifal (Wagner), S450 **Rzewski** A Mensch **Schumann** Geistervariationen, WoO24

Igor Levit *pf*

Sony Classical ® ② 88985 42445-2;

Ⓜ ③ ● 19075 88053-1 (114' • DDD)



Igor Levit likes to deal with big subjects, whether it's late Beethoven or supreme Bach. Now he addresses something bigger still: life and death itself; though the set is titled 'Life', looking at the works list, you might be forgiven for thinking that 'Death'

would have been a more apt name.

The project itself grew from a personal tragedy, with the accidental death of a close friend of Levit's. The resulting pair of discs are a formidable, perhaps even forbidding prospect and they demand intense concentration.

The album begins in the Stygian gloom of Busoni's *Fantasia after JS Bach* – a work written in 1909 in memory of his father. Levit gives the piece a cloudier, more mysterious opening than Hamelin and his tempo is steadier. At the point where Busoni quotes Bach's chorale melody, BWV766, Levit finds an apt solemnity, marvelling at each harmonic shift. Even in the biggest of climaxes, the sound never becomes overbearing, thanks as much to Sony's stellar engineers as to the pianist himself. But it's in the quieter moments that Levit's musicianship is most telling – just sample the close of the Fantasia, with its air of quiet mystery.

The way Levit has formed this programme is extraordinarily effective. The Brahms reworking for left hand of Bach's D minor violin Chaconne is a probing, introverted affair, and how effectively Levit can imbue a single line with light and shade; as the music ascends into the treble, there's a real feeling of it coming into the light, too. You might prefer a more

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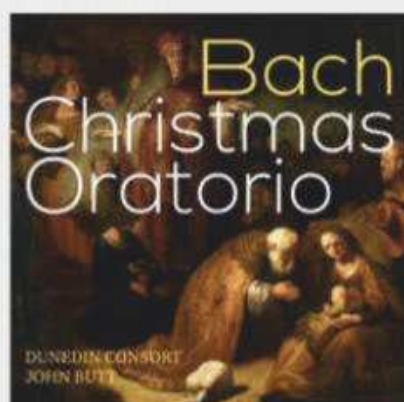
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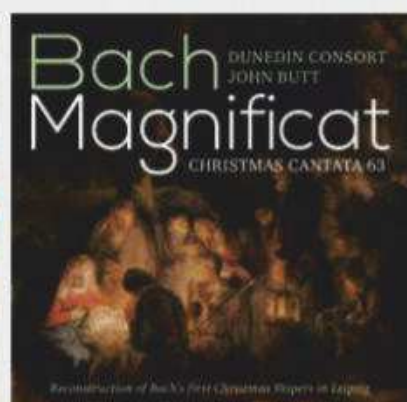
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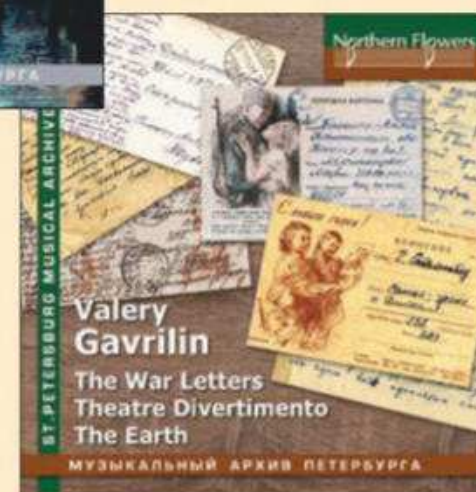
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Colourful and magnetic: Mahan Esfahani approaches the English virginal tradition with vigour and vitality

dramatic approach but this one has nobility in spades. Talking of coming into the light, that's something that has been happening to Schumann's long-neglected *Ghost Variations*. If Imogen Cooper brings to them a sense of inevitability and Anderszewski revels in their strangeness, Levit reveals something different again. He gives the theme an enormous sense of regret, while the repeated Ds in the fourth variation have a sense of grounding, in contrast to Anderszewski, who sees them as dramatic cries, leading to an agitated final variation, whereas Levit consoles with a yearning beauty.

From Schumann to Frederic Rzewski's 'A Mensch', the third movement from *Dreams, Part 1*, and itself a memorial to the actor and poet Steve Ben Israel. Levit has already proved himself a supremely sympathetic champion of Rzewski and he captures the changeability of mood, from the reflective to the sardonically playful, bringing a sense of inevitability as idea follows idea.

Liszt dominates the second disc, beginning with a fine account of the Wagner *Parsifal* paraphrase. What comes next is even more striking: Busoni's reimagining for piano of Liszt's mighty organ work, the Fantasia and Fugue on the chorale *Ad nos, ad salutarem undam*. Levit, never hurried, whips up a veritable storm of sonorities, yet there's always a clarity of

thinking that allows him to guide us through the fullest of textures and most virtuoso of writing. He brings an intensity to the *Adagio*, which is grave and spacious in his hands. Ohlsson is notably faster here – perhaps more to my taste – yet Levit somehow manages to beguile through sheer conviction. The final Fugue is underpinned by a violent energy, and it's only with the affirmative culminating bars that the darkness is eventually banished.

From here to Liszt's reworking of Wagner's *Liebestod*, seductively voiced and ultimately unerringly soulful. Without late Liszt, Busoni's *Berceuse* would have been unimaginable: one of his strangest utterances (in which the pianist is instructed to hold down both pedals throughout), it has a bitonal middle section and, throughout, Busoni achieves much with the sparest of means. Here, I do find Levit just a little too drawn-out compared to the masterly Hamelin. Bill Evans's *Peace Piece* improvisation might seem an odd bedfellow but in fact it fits perfectly. Evans created it in a 1958 recording session and in his hands it has a directness that is inimitable (and shows how much he learnt not just from Debussy but from Messiaen too). That Levit manages to make it sound his own without betraying the original is tribute to his extraordinary artistry.

The essay by Anselm Cybinski forms the ideal counterpoint to the aural experience.

This is a fascinating, compelling set that demands to be heard. **Harriet Smith**

Busoni Fantasia after JS Bach, Berceuse –

selected comparison:

Hamelin (8/98⁸, 11/13) (HYPE) CDA67951/3

Schumann Geistervariationen – *selected comparisons:*

Cooper (10/15) (CHAN) CHAN10874

Anderszewski (4/17) (WARN) 9029 58885-5

Liszt/Busoni Fantasia and Fugue on 'Ad nos' –

selected comparison:

Ohlsson (8/11) (BRID) BRIDGE9337

'The Passinge Mesures'

'Music of the English Virginalists'

Anonymous The Scottish Gigg. Variations on the Romanesca **Bull** Chromatic (Queen Elizabeth's) Pavan and Galliard. Fantasia 'Mr Dr Bull' **Byrd** The Passinge Mesures. Ut, re, mi, fa, sol, la **Dowland/Anonymous** Can she excuse my wrongs? **G Farnaby** Fantasia. Tell mee, Daphne. Why aske you. Woody-Cock **R Farnaby** Nobodies Gigge **Gibbons** Pavin 'M Orlando Gibbons'. The woods so wild **Inglot** The leaves bee greene **Tomkins** Barafostus Dreame. Pavana

Mahan Esfahani hpd

Hyperion © CDA68249 (78' • DDD)



Two distinct personae emerge from Mahan Esfahani's engaging foray into the English

GRAMOPHONE *Collector*

BACH FOR SOLO VIOLIN

Rob Cowan goes beyond Hilary Hahn's exceptional solo Bach (see page 32) and listens to some other recent ventures in this repertoire



Seasoned Bach: Christoph Schickedanz plays with thought and imagination

Many years ago, during an interview, Nigel Kennedy cited the Adagio from Bach's C major Sonata as a prime example of music that in the right hands can move even the uninitiated to tears. Within the context of this current quartet of players, **Dénes Zsigmondy** (remember his eloquent contribution to Ferdinand Leitner's superb *Haffner* Serenade years ago? – DG) draws closest to that laudable ideal, with his expressive tone and masterly phrasing. Then again, the circumstances of the recording couldn't have been more advantageous: this dedicated 73-year-old had locked himself alone in a church and played Bach 'from his tattered copy of the facsimile'. The result was more than 50 hours of completely unsorted material from which the skilled producers Robert Müller and Martin Rummel created the present set.

Don't expect perfection in every bar; but it's fairly obvious from what we hear that Bach's solo violin music meant the world to Zsigmondy and that sense of cherishing comes across in spades. Take the Siciliano from the G minor Sonata,

where the music's dance element is subtly underlined. Zsigmondy keeps the B minor's noble Sarabande on the move and the Chaconne is both uplifting and admirably flexible. I loved this set and while it has much to convey about these elevated perennials, it should be treated more as a love letter to Bach from an elderly master than the playing of a great violinist in his prime, much like Enescu's even more remarkable 1948 set (Philips – nla, or Istituto Discografico Italiano), made when he was just a few years younger than Zsigmondy was when he set down this set.

On the evidence of what we hear, the remaining three violinists are rather more *au fait* (or should I perhaps say 'connected?') with current views on Baroque performance practice. **Christoph Schickedanz** is a seasoned chamber music player and recording artist and offers some imaginative renditions of individual movements, for example the Sarabande from the D minor Partita, where he substantially varies repeated material. In the B minor Partita he takes an emphatically staccato approach to the

Corrente, then flies straight into the *presto* Double. Like Devy Erlih (Doremi) he 'attaches' the Doubles to the dances that precede them. The A minor Sonata's Fugue is thoughtfully played but the poignant Andante that follows it is a little too formal. Here Heifetz (RCA) and Enescu are unrivalled, at least in terms of focused expression. The Chaconne, however, which is pungently played at a good healthy tempo, has an appropriate sense of gravitas about it.

The German-Norwegian violinist and conductor **Gottfried von der Goltz** is the best known of the group under consideration, principally for his excellent work with the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra. His approach, though consistent, is drier than either Zsigmondy or Schickedanz, the C major Sonata's Fugue suggesting little in the way of exaltation – it does drag rather – while the D minor Chaconne is for the most part bereft of expressive vibrato, though there's something to be said for keeping the tempo more or less steady and some of von der Goltz's playing at speed is impressive. It's a good set, very well recorded, but hardly the most memorable on the current market.

The least familiar name among those cited here is **Mie Kobayashi**, who was invited to become a jury member of the violin division of the Marguerite Long-Jacques Thibaud International Competition. As to her playing, there are times when she bends the line so severely that it threatens to topple over the edge. The first movement of the First Sonata is pretty slow and the Fugue courts some dynamic extremes, though it's often quite delicate. Kobayashi will lean into a chord with a purpose, sometimes toying with subtle *ritardandos*. The opening Allemande of the First Partita occasionally pushes forwards, a dramatic gesture that, while momentarily effective, I wouldn't want to encounter too often. The Corrente is choppy, like Schickedanz's, but without the tension that he generates; nor is the *presto* Double as brilliant as Devy Erlih's.



Then there's the slowly yawning Sarabande, with its prominently elasticated chords, and the opening Grave from Sonata No 2, broadly drawn though there are moments when it glides ethereally. The transition into the fugue is laboured, the fugue itself too effortful by half. The slowly pulsing Andante has next to no vibrato but because the playing lacks any sort of targeted

expressive inflection, the effect is dreary. The 'echo' finale, though, is excellent, while Kobayashi should have redone the opening chord of the D minor Chaconne, which gets proceedings off to an ugly start. It's a big performance with an exaggerated pause after 7'40" and another odd hiatus at 11'47". Not a set to challenge the current list of top recommendations, then.



In fact the only one of these worthy recordings I would want to hang on to is Zsigmondy's, occasionally flawed though it is, and for one good reason: he and he alone performs the music as if his life depends on it. I'm not saying that the other players couldn't, just that on these occasions they didn't. Others who do include Yehudi Menuhin (preferably the recordings from his teenage years – Warner Classics), Arthur Grumiaux (Philips/Decca), Joseph Szigeti (Vanguard), Heifetz, Nathan Milstein (either on Warner Classics or DG) or, among players currently performing, Alina Ibragimova (Hyperion, 11/09), Ning Feng (Channel Classics, 3/18) and Julia Fischer (Pentatone, A/05), though neither quite matches Heifetz, Grumiaux and Milstein for sustained intensity. And please do try and track down that wonderful Enescu recording: the sound might be compromised – and by 1948 Enescu was somewhere past his prime – but sampling even the opening bars of the First Sonata should be enough to convince you that here was an artist whose comprehensive grasp of Bach's inspiring muse hovered way above the norm, even when that norm was already loftily placed. Enescu's recordings are also available via Spotify. 

THE RECORDINGS





JS Bach Solo Violin Sonatas & Partitas
Dénes Zsigmondy
Paladino   PMR0093





JS Bach Solo Violin Sonatas & Partitas
Christoph Schickedanz
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JS Bach Solo Violin Sonatas & Partitas
Gottfried von der Goltz
Aparté   AP176



JS Bach Solo Violin Sonatas & Partitas
Mie Kobayashi
Exton   453818 2765470

virginal tradition (with some possibly Welsh composers, too). One stresses the Renaissance connections of the music, the rigour of its polyphony and the grandness of vision worked out in the more elaborate works of Byrd, Bull and Tomkins. The other is lighter, more intimate and generally livelier, heard in small works by anonymous composers or charismatic, sometimes eccentric fare by Giles Farnaby. The contrast is heightened by Esfahani's choice of two different instruments, one based on a two-manual Fleischer family harpsichord from the early 18th century and the other a deliciously reedy virginals copied from a mid-17th-century instrument.

In a booklet essay that is both charming and churlish, Esfahani sounds defensive about the use of the later, two-manual instrument. He could, he says, go into a long defense of this choice but, 'simply put, I like how it sounds'. The choice speaks for itself, especially in works such as Byrd's hexachord fantasy *Ut, re, mi, fa, sol, la*, where the instrument's expanded colour range allows the performer to contain the music's magnificent sprawl of evolving variations into more contained chapters. He follows that work, a giant in the literature, with a lovely and trifling *Scottish Gigg* from a New York Public Library manuscript, and the juxtaposition is delightful. Played on the virginals, the anonymous Scottish gig is the sorbet after the grand meal. Esfahani's playing is colourful and magnetic, the fingerwork in the more virtuoso works absolutely clean and articulate. The mean-tone tuning gives the accidentals and chromatic outliers in the more harmonically meandering of the pieces a wonderfully piquant twang.

At the end of his essay, Esfahani says: 'I encourage my pianist colleagues in particular to explore this repertoire.' That sent me back to Glenn Gould's occasional essays of music from this period, to be reminded of a very different approach: the scholar in his study, loving every twist and turn of the polyphonic lines, the music hovering in the air like some perfectly sculpted object, stately and slow. That isn't at all how Esfahani plays it. Here it is robust, vital and exciting, and whatever tendency to philosophising the artist may have is left to the booklet notes.

Philip Kennicott

'Russian Émigré Composers'

Grechaninov Moments lyriques, Op 78 – No 1, Prelude; No 2, Lullaby. Pastelle No 2, Op 61 – No 2, Caprice; No 5, Waltz; No 6, Reproche
Medtner Sonata-Ballade, Op 27
Prokofiev Visions fugitives, Op 22 (excs)

Rachmaninov Étude-tableau, Op 39 No 7. Fragments (1917). Vespers (All-Night Vigil), Op 37 – Nunc dimittis
Stravinsky Three Movements from *Petrushka*

Alexander Karpeyev *pf*

Claudio  CR6042-2;   CR6042-6 (70' • DDD)



Given the title, it is surprising, to say the least, that not a single item on this

disc was actually composed in emigration. And given that every piece bar one dates from before October 1917, it is curious that Alexander Karpeyev's programme was conceived for a concert marking the centenary of the Russian Revolution. Its centrepiece is the Medtner *Sonate-Ballade* of 1913-14, inspired by Afanasy Fet's poem depicting Christ's temptations in the wilderness. Evidently an avid Medtner crusader, Karpeyev is unlikely to convert a Medtner sceptic; his playing is simply too expressively crowded and structurally arbitrary for that. Compare Marc-André Hamelin, who allows the sonata to grow organically while depicting each poetic moment in a distinct shade and bringing to vivid life the fight between good and evil represented by the satanic theme in the second movement.

The sacred theme continues in Rachmaninov's (possibly) own transcription of a movement from his *All-Night Vigil* and his funereal *Étude-tableau*. There is certainly a high enough emotional charge in the latter but Karpeyev is no match for Richter's earth-shattering monumentality, nor for Horowitz's theatricality. Similarly the *Three Movements from Petrushka*. Karpeyev's are shadowed by a number of laboured passages, so that the performance as a whole becomes something of a battle royal – not a patch on the classic Pollini for bravura and colouristic flair.

Rachmaninov's rarely performed *Fragments* and the five Grechaninov miniatures are a pleasant bonus. But I'm not sure who would want the average-to-good accounts of barely half of Prokofiev's *Visions fugitives*. There is a workable recital programme here – 'Before the Revolution' or 'Before Emigration', perhaps – but as a CD I fear it is hardly collectable.

Michelle Assay

Medtner – selected comparison:

Hamelin (10/98) (HYPE) CDA67221/4

Stravinsky – selected comparison:

Pollini (6/72^R, 6/95) (DG) 447 431-2GOR

Moritz Eggert

This German's huge cabinet of musical curiosities houses the ironic as well as the disarmingly sincere, says **Paul Kilbey**

I have been collecting things all my life,' writes Moritz Eggert in the booklet note to the album 'The Collectors' (released earlier this year). 'Books, Comics, Board Games, Whisky, it is terrible.' His obsession informs his work too, he explains: 'As composers we are collectors of music. The idea that music is magically created out of nothing in our heads is nonsense, in fact we are constantly assembling and reassembling the gigantic library of music in our heads.'

It's an unusual analogy, but an enthralling one. Eggert's piece *The Collectors* (2017), which is featured on the album, shimmers through its myriad varied repetitions, punctured by bizarre sounds from a diverse array (a collection, of course) of percussion instruments, plus a few shouted words. Every composition, you could say, is a collection of its composer's ideas, more or less artfully curated, but the hypnotic piano-writing here makes you wonder if this sort of repetition-focused music is the work of particularly avid collectors, composers who obsessively display material that almost seems identical, until you really start to pay attention.

Classical music can fruitfully elide with something else, such that we see and hear everything through new eyes and ears

Minimalism may be a reference point in *The Collectors*, but Eggert is no minimalist. Styles, or even musical languages, are another thing he collects and displays. Born in Heidelberg in 1965, Eggert is now based in Munich, where he is professor of composition at the University of Music and Performing Arts while maintaining a career as both composer and pianist. He is startlingly prolific, with more than 250 works to his name, including at least a dozen operas, and his worklist is a veritable cabinet of curiosities.

Though not the best-known figure in the UK, he is a prominent voice in Germany, often weighing in on debates via his contemporary-music blog, the Bad Blog of Musick, whose name nods its head to his assumed 'bad boy' status in the German music world. He has also made a splash in the wider media several times, notably by writing not only music for the 2006 FIFA World Cup opening ceremony, but also an entire 'soccer oratorio' entitled *Die Tiefe des Raumes* (2005). The year after the World Cup, his opera *Freax* (2007), based on Tod Browning's uber-controversial 1932 film *Freaks*, horrified the German press in a concert performance (it wasn't staged until 2017). And *Ich akzeptiere die Nutzungsbedingungen* ('I Accept the Terms and Conditions', 2014) is an eyebrow-raising setting of the Google user agreement for baritone and string orchestra.

EGGERT FACTS

Born Heidelberg, Germany, November 25, 1965

A champion of new music

In 1991, while still studying in Munich, Eggert and fellow composer Sandeep Bhagwati founded aDevantgarde – a new-music festival that still runs today.

Incendiary blogging On his Bad Blog of Musick, Eggert writes on music industry issues from the weighty to the light-hearted. His 'Everything That Is Wrong with "Mozart in the Jungle"' series amusingly picks apart a US drama about the New York classical music scene.

Eggert on Eggert 'For me as a composer, it was always a strange, almost absurd idea to separate my own musical world from the world surrounding me. For this reason, self-sufficient, self-contained musical systems have never particularly interested me.'

'In a boardgame one has to follow the rules to win. In art one has to *break* the rules to win.'

A collector of controversies, then? That would be unfair: moreover, he is a collector of 'edge cases', of instances where classical music can fruitfully elide with something else, perhaps something unexpected, such that we end up seeing and hearing everything through new eyes and ears. 'I want to find a way to tell the story of how music is collected,' he writes in the same booklet note to 'The Collectors' – 'how it consists of sounds and ideas and events that slowly begin to make sense because they are arranged in a certain order.'

Another recent CD, 'Ohrwurm' (released earlier this year on the Spektral label), contains two vocal works that do something similar: both *Ohrwurm* (2010) and *Bring Me Up, Bring Me Down* (2013) attempt to exorcise tunes stuck in Eggert's head ('earworms', as the saying goes), the former one of those unplaceable bland melodies that we all get stuck with from time to time, and the latter the smash hit pop song 'Mr Saxobeat' by Alexandra Stan, which Eggert got lumbered with listening to while on holiday with his children. Eggert attempts yet another exorcism – of Falco's equally catchy pop song 'Rock Me Amadeus' – in *Amadé, Amadé* (2006) for winds and piano, amusingly coupled with Mozart's quintet for the same ensemble, K452, on a Col Legno album.

Muzak (2016) plays a similar game on a vast orchestral scale. It was written for the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra's long-running Musica Viva series, and its title refers not specifically to 'elevator music' as such, but to the broader concept of background music, the inescapable music





PHOTOGRAPHY: KATHARINA DUBNO

we hear around us all the time: it's a 43-minute, stream-of-consciousness-style collage of fragments that refers to every type of popular music under the sun, from advertising jingles to André Rieu, over the top of which Eggert himself wistfully croons on the recording. 'It's alright,' is the first phrase he sings, above a comforting guitar-and-harp accompaniment – although the chaotic orchestral writing around it does not, in fact, sound all right at all. But while it begins as an ironic look at the lie that commercial music sells us, *Muzak* ultimately seems to reach a wryly amused truce with its material.

Irony is a connecting thread through much of Eggert's work, but his music can also be disarmingly sincere. *Wide Unclasp* (2002) is a song-cycle for singer and jazz band which was originally made as a concept album (on the Between the Lines label); several of the movements were later turned into a concert suite (*Anna Who Was Mad*, 2006), and the whole was made into a theatrical or 'scenic' version in 2007. Classical music and jazz don't always sit together so comfortably, but Eggert seems completely at home writing for (and playing with) this ensemble, as if questions of genre didn't even exist. The songs are haunting settings of late poems by Anne Sexton, and of the two Shakespeare quotations that inexplicably bedeck two stained-glass windows in Winchester Mystery House in

San Jose, California, the architecturally surreal mansion created over more than thirty years of non-stop building by widowed heiress Sarah Winchester. Eclecticism is, evidently, a watchword for his source material, as well as his musical style.

The style question can be distracting – ironically so, when part of the point of working so broadly is that style doesn't really matter anyway. But there are also plenty of Eggert works with less controversial points of reference, which – like the slower numbers of *Wide Unclasp* – are often affectingly lyrical, even romantic. *Neue Dichter Lieben* (2000) is a song-cycle not by any means devoid of Eggert's puckish sense of humour, yet also quite direct and sincere as a set of love songs. And *Adagio – An Answered Question* (1994, arranged for smaller ensemble by Katharina Susanne Müller in 2011), an elegant early work for strings, doffs its cap to Ives yet also has an almost Mahlerian melodic intensity. He wrote it towards the end of his student years (which included a stint in the UK with Robert Saxton), and stylistically it – and a few others collected on the CD 'The Raven Nevermore' (Audite) – also bears traces of his studies with Wilhelm Killmayer in Munich, as fellow composer Alexander Strauch has pointed out. A private student of Orff, Killmayer rejected the post-Second World War compositional orthodoxy and found a more melodically grounded voice. The Audite album concludes with the violin-and-piano work *Drei Seelen* (2002): three contrasting variations on a melody by Killmayer, inspired by the teacher's comment that one could never have too many musical 'souls' in one's breast. A poetic way to express something that seems axiomatic to Eggert's approach to writing music.

Even 'bad boys' have teachers, after all, and even polystylists need guiding principles, connecting threads between their works and – needless to say – exemplary compositional technique. Eggert may have an eye for the absurd, but he turns his musical curios into expertly crafted shapes. He arranges his own collection, that is, with the sensitivity of a master curator. It's just a very strange museum. **G**

LISTEN TO EGGERT

Experience eclecticism and the absurd in all its glory



The Collectors

Konstantyn Napolov *perc* Eke Simons *pf*

TRPTK

Eggert's ode to collecting is the longest piece featured on an album of music for piano and percussion duo. The other composers included are Jan-Peter de Graaff, Yannis Kyriakides and Samuel Penderbayne.



'Musica Viva 30'

Moritz Eggert *voc* Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra / David Robertson, Peter Rundel

Neos (8/18)

Muzak (2016) and fellow Musica Viva commission *Number Nine VII: Masse* (2008) are both played expertly by the esteemed Bavarians. The latter asks an intriguing question: what would happen if every orchestral musician had to play throughout a piece, non-stop?



Wide Unclasp

Céline Rudolph *voc* Steven Bernstein *tpt* Moritz Eggert *pf* et al
Between the Lines

Eggert's jazz composition is particularly stimulating proof of his versatility, and benefits from strong performances from vocalist Céline Rudolph and the whole band.

Vocal



Hugo Shirley hears Rattle's return to Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde*:

'Every flutter-tongued quiver and celestially-lined shiver has a vividness that outdoes the earlier CBSO recording' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 85**



Alexandra Coghlan welcomes L'Arpeggiata's *'Himmelsmusik'*:

'Jaroussky and Scheen are well-matched soloists, and the results are wonderfully rich and unexpectedly sensual' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 89**

JS Bach

Bist du bei mir, BWV508. Cantatas: No 4 – Sinfonia; No 21 – Sinfonia; No 36 – Willkommen, werter Schatz; No 70 – Ach, soll nicht dieser grosse Tag ... Seligster Erquickungstag; No 75 – Sinfonia; No 88 – Siehe, ich will viel Fischer aussenden; No 100 – Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan; No 156 – Sinfonia; No 159 – Es ist vollbracht; No 194 – Was des Höchsten Glanz erfüllt; No 201 – Zu Tanze, zu Sprunge; No 212 – Sinfonia; No 214 – Kron und Preis gekrönter Damen. St Matthew Passion, BWV244 – Am Abend, da es kühle war ... Mache dich, mein Herze, rein; Gebt mir meinen Jesum wieder

Benjamin Appl bar **Concerto Köln**

Sony Classical © 19075 85162-2 (68' • DDD • T/t)



There are no concepts, no gimmicks and just a single-word title – 'Bach' – for Benjamin

Appl's latest release. This is the young baritone's second disc since signing an exclusive contract with Sony Classical in 2016, and perhaps the inevitable follow-up to 'Heimat', the singer's journey through his personal origins and influences. Now, after Schubert, Brahms and Wolf, the Lieder singer takes a musical trip back to where it all began: Johann Sebastian Bach.

The selection is an eclectic one. Just when you think you're settling in for a recital of favourites – 'Mache dich' and 'Gebt mir meinen Jesum wieder' from the *St Matthew Passion*, Stölzel's 'Bist du bei mir' collected in the *Notenbüchlein für Anna Magdalena Bach*, the lovely opening Sinfonia from Cantata No 156, better known as the slow movement of the F minor Harpsichord Concerto – Appl mixes it up.

What's most surprising is the humour. Appl is, by instinct, a musical storyteller and brings a raconteur's enjoyment to the musical battle between Apollo and Pan vividly staged in 'Zu Tanze, zu Sprunge' from the cantata *Geschwinde, ihr wirbelnden Winde* (just listen to those onomatopoeic repetitions of 'wackelt'), and relishes the

hellish rasp of the Day of Judgement trumpets as described in Cantata No 70, *Wachet! betet! betet! wachet!*.

Concerto Köln provide a skilled supporting cast for Appl's musical drama, seizing the spotlight in musical cameos: the distant violin fireworks in the opening bars of 'Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan', the dulcimer drawing us into the giddy dance of the Sinfonia from the *Peasant Cantata* (No 212), the jangling violence of the solo violin in 'Gebt mir meinem Jesum wieder'.

But vocally there are issues. Appl's unfinished sound, his tendency to leave note- and phrase-endings unfinished, to grip the tone rather than release into natural spin, the tight top and underpowered bottom of the voice, all make for some rather uneven performances. He feels overfaced in the semiquavers of 'Siehe, ich will viel Fischer aussenden', where intonation and articulation both suffer. Often there's simply not enough body to the tone to generate satisfying legato, coasting on top of Bach's lines rather than inhabiting them. Appl's natural, unaffected delivery and bright, tenorial tone may yet make for a great artist but he's still far from the finished product. **Alexandra Coghlan**

JS Bach

'Sonn und Schild'

Cantatas – No 4, Christ lag in Todesbanden (Easter Cantata); No 79, Gott der Herr ist Sonn und Schild; No 80, Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott
Dorothee Mields sop **Alex Potter** counterten
Thomas Hobbs ten **Peter Kooij** bass
Collegium Vocale Gent / Philippe Herreweghe
PHI © LPH030 (59' • DDD • T/t)



'God the Lord is Sun and Shield' – the title of Cantata No 79 – is the

epithet given to a trio of Luther-inspired works continuing Philippe Herreweghe's patient and thoughtful series of themed

cantatas, which started with Virgin Classics in the late 1980s, followed by the bulk with Harmonia Mundi and the latest cache on Herreweghe's own label, PHI.

Collegium Vocale Gent's distinctive approach to conveying the 'Word' has underpinned many deeply satisfying cantata performances over the years, their litany of conceits projected with a degree of restraint, even occasional asceticism, but always profoundly elegant. Yet, as we hear so convincingly in three of Bach's most celebrated and ambitious works, any corrective inclinations over excess are balanced by beautifully judged palates of fresh, open expression.

Ein feste Burg is a case in point: no hammering out of Luther's 95 theses here but an affirmative and calculated evolution of the building blocks of faith which then find greater meaning in the way Herreweghe patiently curates a convincing journey towards the longed-for Kingdom. Delectable pacing and organic contrast in the arias represent the keys to the heart of the work, as do the soloists. Veteran Bachian Peter Kooij is less convincing than of old but still a seasoned interpreter, but the highlight is 'Wie selig' – that unfailingly entrancing duet – which Alex Potter and Thomas Hobbs sing with unerring tenderness.

Any disc with *Christ lag in Todesbanden* raises the stakes before a note is heard. If there is a Bach equivalent of Mozart's Piano Concerto in E flat, K271, where every attribute seems faultlessly assembled, then this is it. Both were 21. Not surprisingly, Herreweghe follows a concentrated course of interiority, chiselling out meaning from Bach's irrepressible imagery with each 'versus'. The third verse duet is utterly beguiling with its exhausted sighs on 'Tod' ('death'), the emergence of the doubling cornett a masterstroke in its glow of promise of salvation.

If Herreweghe coaxes us towards the reflective 17th-century vocal concerto in his reading of Cantata No 4 – especially in how the various vocal and instrumental



Lyric tenor and vocal actor: Allan Clayton embraces the enormous stylistic range of Liszt's songs – see review on page 85

dialogues offer true rhetorical insight – then in the chorus of No 79 he thrusts us into the elegant 18th-century world of the modern Italian concerto and a display of intensely spun contrapuntal pyrotechnics of Bach at his absolute peak in 1725. Bach knew this was a corker because he returned to it for his compendium of four short Lutheran Masses a decade later. It's a kind of return for Herreweghe, too, as his performance of those Masses has always shone with a special brightness. Despite a few rough edges (some talking can be heard at the beginning of the fourth movement of Cantata No 80), deeply satisfying insights abound in each of these masterpieces.

Jonathan Freeman-Attwood

Berlioz

Grande Messe des morts (Requiem), Op 5
Bror Magnus Tødenes *ten* **Choir of Collegiûm Músicûm; Edvard Grieg Choir; Royal Northern College of Music Chorus; Eikanger-Bjørsvik Musikklag; Musicians from Bergen Philharmonic Youth Orchestra and Crescendo; Bergen Philharmonic Choir and Orchestra / Edward Gardner**

Chandos © CHSA5219 (81' • DDD/DSD • T/t)
 Recorded live at Grieghallen, Bergen, Norway, May 21-24, 2018

Berlioz

Grande Messe des morts (Requiem), Op 5

Kenneth Tarver *ten* **Seattle Pro Musica; Seattle Symphony Chorale; Seattle Symphony Orchestra / Ludovic Morlot**
 Seattle Symphony Media © SSM1019 (76' • DDD)

Recorded live at Benaroya Hall, Seattle, November 9 & 11, 2017



Back in days of old, recordings – and, for that matter, live performances – of Berlioz's huge-scale Mass for the Dead could be rarer than hen's teeth. But (as in the case of a later 19th-century repertoire rival, Verdi's Requiem) those performances that were achieved tended to fall on one side or the other of the coin: purely devotional or dramatically illustrative. A score that called for a string strength of 50.20.20.18, four 'offstage' brass bands and a chorus of 80 'sopranos', 60 tenors and 70 basses was obviously going to be put to seriously detailed use matching the often graphic descriptions of the Mass text. There was

also the question in performance of how much could or should be attempted to simulate Berlioz's original stage management of those forces in his 1837 Paris Les Invalides premiere.

The two new performances issued here are both taken from recent live concerts led by conductors experienced in opera – which should be a good omen, although the work's now quite sizeable discography doesn't always support that assumption. From Bergen's Grieghallen, Edward Gardner's performance derives from festival performances (and, presumably, rehearsals) in May 2018. It is very much on the devotional side, an event contemplated and observed rather than experienced.

Ludovic Morlot, a sometime chief conductor of Brussels's La Monnaie opera, gave his concerts with what is now his own orchestra in Seattle in November 2017. Everything feels and sounds smaller-scale and more concentrated in a conventional concert hall. Yet Morlot clearly seeks a more dramatic and live involvement with the texts his choirs are singing and an effective placing of the four 'offstage orchestras' and the bass drum for their dramatic irruption into the 'Tuba mirum'. In Seattle that is certainly a bigger, more shocking moment than in the Bergen

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performance, although neither has the sheer muscle – and phenomenal presence of the timpani – that Philips managed so many years back in 1969 for Colin Davis and the LSO in Westminster Cathedral.

It's frequently commented that this Requiem may be famous for the loud noise it makes in (especially) the central sections of the 'Dies irae' and the 'Rex tremendae' but also that it is also full of surprise quiet passages and unpredictable solutions to the use of the big orchestra – the gentle start of the 'Dies irae' or the *a cappella* setting of 'Quaerens me'. Gardner has taken good note of these and his choirs are both heartfelt and effective at realising them. Yet these quiet passages can also seem to cast too long a shadow over what follows – for example, the rushing figure that energises the 'Dies irae' before the basses' 'Quantus tremor' may be intended here strictly to obey the composer's marking *animez un peu* but deprives us in its relative mildness of the drama of other readings. Nor, as already suggested, is the *Andante maestoso* marking of the 'Tuba mirum' the pinning-to-the-back-of-your-seat moment it can be elsewhere. Everything is big and hearty but not life-changing as it is under Davis or Charles Munch (1959), whose fiery sureness in Boston regularly outpoints his inevitably dated recording and choral stamina.

While the clock times do not show that Morlot is appreciably quicker than Gardner, his performance certainly feels quicker. There is no room here for the dreaming and contemplation that Gardner seems to encourage; Morlot keeps moving forwards, seeking drama. The placing of the *Sanctus*'s tenor soloist always seems to be a matter of controversy and conjecture. Berlioz's only comment in the score was that it 'may be sung by 10 tenors in unison' – so presumably he wanted to hear it. Gardner, like Colin Davis's third and last recording, has an Italianate tenor (Bror Magnus Tødenes) seemingly positioned far away but singing big. Morlot's Kenneth Tarver was in fact in the Seattle hall's organ loft but sounds too close right up next to us. Beecham's Richard Lewis (Royal Albert Hall, 1959) sounds a good compromise middle distance, as does Robert Murray in Paul McCreeh's 2011 period-informed performance in Wrocław. None has managed the sheer sweetness and French style of Léopold Simoneau for Munch.

It's always a little disappointing not to be able to hail newcomers in a work as acoustically challenging as this Requiem. Yet neither of these performances, sincere, committed and well prepared as they undoubtedly are (and adequately recorded in their very different venues), storms the

heavens or the mind in the way that Munch, Beecham, Davis or the more recent McCreeh have. That is where I would still look first. **Mike Ashman**

Selected comparisons:

LSO, C Davis, r1969

(9/70^R, 4/86^R, 8/01) (DECC) 478 5601DC15

Boston SO, Munch (12/60^R) (RCA) 19075 81635-2

RPO, Beecham (4/99) (BBCL) BBCL4011-2

Wrocław PO, McCreeh (11/11) (SIGN) SIGCD280

LSO, C Davis, r2012 (6/13) (LSO) LSO0729

Bernstein

Wonderful Town

Alysha Umphress *mez*..... Ruth

Danielle de Niese *sop*..... Eileen

Nathan Gunn *bar*..... Bob Baker

Duncan Rock *bar*..... Wreck/Second Editor

Ashley Riches *bass-bar*..... Guide/First Editor/Frank

Stephen John Davis *sng*..... First Cop/Chick Clark

David Butt Philip *ten*..... Lonigan

Kevin Brewis *bar*.....

..... Third Cop/First Man/Cadet/Villager

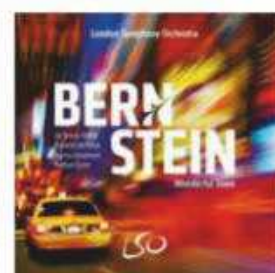
London Symphony Chorus and Orchestra /

Sir Simon Rattle

LSO Live (M) LSO0813 (70' • DDD/DSD)

Recorded live at the Barbican, London,

December 16 & 21, 2017



I've always been slightly puzzled as to why Simon Rattle (and subsequently

Mark Elder) chose to anoint this particular show among Bernstein's Broadway canon – not because I don't love it as dearly as the others but because for all its brilliance it was a rush job (two months) replacing another's score (Leroy Anderson), and with the best will in the world its level of innovation is hardly comparable to those which preceded and followed it.

This is the second recording to have Rattle at the helm, the by-product of two live concerts rather awkwardly mounted as part of the LSO's contribution to Bernstein 100, though not, it has to be said, in the same league as his first, featuring Audra McDonald and Kim Criswell as the Sherwood sisters, whose efforts to take a big bite out of the Big Apple bring much jollity and, of course, the obligatory romance.

This repertoire is anyway not natural territory for Rattle. For anyone steeped in its flair and flavour, the style doesn't feel in-bred. It's the earnestness that doesn't ring true, the way in which what should come naturally simply sounds overworked. This has little or nothing to do with the LSO, whose prowess in this repertoire traces a line of succession through Michael

Tilson Thomas to the composer himself (not that he was always the best advocate of his own stuff). Clearly, though, the band here is way too big for those tight corners (especially the large body of strings) and one misses that easy, laid-back fluidity that comes from a deep and abiding familiarity with 'the way it goes'. The string intro into 'My Darlin' Eileen' sounds like *Traviata*.

I can see why Danielle de Niese was cast. As one who burst into our awareness putting the showbiz into Handel's Cleopatra, she's a natural stage animal and a big personality whatever the repertoire. But Eileen Sherwood isn't a big personality and there's something wrong with the balance of the casting if she totally overshadows her bolshy big sister Ruth. For sure Eileen requires a legit soprano but de Niese resides in opera; and, try as she may to lighten the style and the sound, it all sounds awkwardly overcooked.

'A little bit in love', with its sexy sigh of contentment so deftly written into the melodic line, is way too knowing. It feels self-consciously 'fruity'.

Paradoxically, the Ruth of Alysha Umphress (who does come from the right side of the tracks) is so understated and throwaway that she kind of disappears in de Niese's wake. 'One hundred easy ways' is too laid back where it needs to be feisty. Her preparation for each punchline is slow and laboured, like she's worried she'll trip herself up with the quick-fire delivery.

The love interest goes for nothing. Nathan Gunn, as Bob Baker, is sounding oddly woolly now and the operatic 'production' of the voice jars somewhat. 'A quiet girl' is so flat (and so slow) that it actually makes a beautiful song into a complete downer.

Worst of all, though, is the deployment of the entire LSO Chorus. One needs a specialist group (like the Maida Vale Singers or indeed a drama college ensemble) for a piece like this. You get the message quite early, with the final sung line of the dance episode 'Conquering New York' (with its *Prelude, Fugue and Riffs* self-quotation) – 'Maybe I'll never go home' – but 'Conga' and worse still 'Swing' (where Umphress mutters her way through the 'hip' jive-talking) are just embarrassing, the LSO Chorus sounding like, well, the LSO Chorus.

Go for Rattle's first version if you must – Criswell and McDonald are wonderful on it. Me, I'd go back to the Original Broadway Cast. But I would, wouldn't I?

Edward Seckerson

Selected comparisons:

Rattle (9/99) (WARN) 9029 57398-7

Original Broadway Cast (DECC) 440 014 602-2

Caldara

Maddalena ai piedi di Cristo

Emmanuelle de Negri, **Mailys de Villoutreys** *sops*

Benedetta Mazzucato *contr* **Reinoud Van**

Mechelen *ten* **Riccardo Novaro** *bar*

Le Banquet Céleste / Damien Guillon *counterten*

Alpha Ⓢ ② ALPHA426 (128' • DDD • T/t)



Maddalena ai piedi di Cristo was probably composed for Caldara's native

Venice in about 1697-98, perhaps for the Oratorian order at Santa Maria della Fava. Lodovico Forni's libretto concerns Mary Magdalene's choice between profane carnal pleasure or becoming a sacred disciple of Christ; an animated rivalry for her soul takes place between Earthly Love and Heavenly Love, while the conflicted Maddalena receives wise counsel from Martha and is encouraged by Christ – whose divine words are scorned by a hypocritical Pharisee.

The oratorio's musical variety and engaging narrative were proved amply by the *Gramophone* Award-winning account by René Jacobs and the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis but the time is ripe for another interpretation. The unfolding religious drama zips along thanks to Damien Guillon's crystal-clear handling of Caldara's concise arias. Emmanuelle de Negri's eloquent Maddalena provides several potent doses of penitential weeping: 'Pompe inutili' is a spellbinding dialogue with cellist Julien Barre, and the string-laden slow laments 'In lagrime stemprato' and 'Per il mar del pianto mio' are sublime. Amor Terreno's sleepily seductive 'Dormi o cara' is sung caressingly by Benedetta Mazzucato; her later tantrum 'Orribili, terribili' is thrillingly furious. Guillon's Amor Celeste is solemnly authoritative, whether in the vivid bass-driven 'Spera, consolati' or in the gentleness of his duet with violinist Caroline Bayet in 'Da quel strale, che stilla veleno'. Martha's rapturous contemplation 'Non sdegna il ciel le lacrime' is sung gorgeously by Mailys de Villoutreys. Riccardo Novaro's Pharisee conveys bullying agitation, especially in the spikily disdainful 'Chi drizzar di pianta adulta', whereas Christ is sung by Reinoud Van Mechelen with radiant serenity.

The assorted string ritornellos framing many of the arias (often in five parts) are played with suppleness and astute shaping by Le Banquet Céleste, and the continuo support in recitatives and simpler arias pays close attention to the singers' texts; melodramatic organ accompaniments in

recitatives that present extrovertly pious statements are over-egged but otherwise Guillon's shrewd direction produces a scintillating performance that offers fresh light on Caldara's qualities. **David Vickers**

Comparative version:

Jacobs (11/96) (HARM) HMC90 5221/2

Duparc • Ravel

'Aimer et mourir – danses et mélodies'

Duparc *Au pays où se fait la guerre*^a. *Aux étoiles*.

Chanson triste^a. *L'invitation au voyage*^a. *Phidylé*^a

Ravel *Daphnis et Chloé – Suite No 2. Valses nobles et sentimentales*

^a**Magdalena Kožená** *mez* **Deutsches**

Symphonie-Orchester Berlin / Robin Ticciati

Linn Ⓢ CKD610 (60' • DDD • T/t)



Robin Ticciati's beautiful but uneven first disc with Berlin's Deutsches Symphonie-

Orchester, pairing Debussy with Fauré, was released in October 2017 (A/17) to coincide with his appointment as the orchestra's music director. A year on we now have its successor, which places Duparc alongside Ravel and is in every respect a significant achievement. In part, one suspects, this is a reflection of Ticciati's deepening relationship with the orchestra itself, though it must also be added that his occasionally considered way with the late 19th/early 20th-century French repertory, which made his *La mer* seem fractionally too deliberate, suits this second pair of composers down to the ground.

The title, 'Aimer et mourir', isn't entirely accurate. No one dies here, unless one assumes that the absent soldier of 'Au pays où se fait la guerre' has been killed in action, which neither the text nor the music supports. The prevailing mood of the first two thirds of the disc – the *Daphnis* Suite, the Duparc mélodies sung by Magdalena Kožená – is one of heady sensuality, rooted in careful appraisal of sonority and texture and in a fondness for, and an ability to sustain, slower than usual speeds.

The balance at the start of *Daphnis* is weighted away from the woodwind towards the lower strings, which awaken somnolently in the depths before rising majestically upwards. The *Pantomime*'s flute solo unfolds with languid torpor over what feels like near-stasis in the strings, and the *Danse générale* is all the more exciting for being taken steadily, accumulating momentum as it goes, rather than rushed or scrambled.

Similar qualities are apparent in Ticciati's Duparc. He and Kožená take well over four

minutes for 'Chanson triste', when most performances last between two and three, and the dark strings and slowly evolving woodwind and brass colours tell us everything we need to know about emotional yearning. 'L'invitation au voyage' sounds very Impressionist and suggestive. 'Au pays où se fait la guerre' throbs with fear and longing, and 'Phidylé' ends with a huge surge of passion in its anticipation of consummated desire. Kožená, in glorious voice throughout, lets Duparc's vocal lines do the work rather than edging towards declamation. It's all utterly beguiling.

Following on from all this, however, the poise and abrasion at the start of *Valses nobles et sentimentales* are a bit like a cold shower after a sauna. This is another excellent performance, beautifully judged in its cool nostalgia and slightly brittle elegance, played with wonderful finesse and immaculate attention to detail. Ticciati rounds the proceedings off, meanwhile, with *Aux étoiles*, one of Duparc's handful of rarely heard orchestral works, a Tristanesque evocation of the night sky, ravishingly done. It's a gorgeous disc: do listen to it. **Tim Ashley**

Elgar

'The Hills of Dreamland – Orchestral Songs'

Pleading, Op 48^a. *Five Songs*, Op 59^b. *Two Songs*,

Op 60^a. *Follow the Colours: Marching Song for*

Soldiers^c. *Grania and Diarmid – incidental*

music^a. *The King's Way*^a. *As I laye a-thynkyng*^d.

Dry those fair, those crystal eyes^d. *In the Dawn*^d.

Like to the Damask Rose^d. *The Mill Wheel:*

Winter^d. *Muleteer's Serenade*^d. *Queen Mary's*

Song^d. *The River*^d. *The Shepherd's Song*^d. *Speak,*

music^d. *The Torch*^d

^{ab}**Kathryn Rudge**, ^d**Nathalie de Montmollin** *sops*

^{bc}**Henk Neven** *bar* ^d**Barry Collett** *pf* ^{abc}**BBC Concert**

Orchestra / Barry Wordsworth

Somm Ⓢ (Two discs for the price of one)

SOMMCD271/2 (91' • DDD • T)



Only last January I was heaping praise upon Roderick Williams's distinguished advocacy

of Elgar's orchestral songs (Chandos, coupled with Andrew Davis's terrific BBC PO *Falstaff*), and now Somm offers us an even more comprehensive overview of this same repertoire. Duties are shared between the Dutch baritone Henk Neven and mezzo-soprano Kathryn Rudge (former BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artists, both), and they are excellently supported in turn by Barry Wordsworth and the BBC Concert Orchestra. Liverpool-born Rudge is in refulgent voice for the darkly

passionate Op 60 diptych of 1910 (featuring texts by Pietro d'Alba – Elgar's own pseudonym, this, and a sly reference to his daughter Carice's white angora pet rabbit!), while it's hard to imagine more sheerly beguiling renderings of either 'The Wind at Dawn' (1888) or 'Pleading' (a wistful setting from 1908 of a poem by Arthur Salmon). If, in the three Op 59 songs, Neven doesn't eclipse Roderick Williams in terms of imaginative flair or idiomatic word-pointing (the haunting 'Twilight' being a case in point), his remains a most pleasing contribution; certainly, he gives a splendidly lusty account of 'The Pipes of Pan'.

Elsewhere, Neven and Wordsworth make out an unexpectedly convincing case for the patriotic 'Follow the Colours' – originally requested by Novello in 1908 and first heard at the Royal Albert Hall's Empire Day concert under the title of 'Marching Song' – but not even Rudge can redeem 'The King's Way', a vehicle for the contralto Clara Butt to words of dubious quality by Alice Elgar and the trio melody from the *Pomp and Circumstance* March No 4 celebrating the formal opening of 'the newest street in London town'. Last, but definitely not least, comes Elgar's wonderful 1901 incidental music for *Grania and Diarmid*: Rudge proves a deeply eloquent exponent of 'There are seven that pull the thread', and Wordsworth secures some ideally atmospheric playing both here and in the magnificent 'Funeral March'.

At no extra cost, Somm throws in an intriguing programme of solo songs excellently recorded for the Elgar Society by Paul Arden-Taylor at Southampton's Turner Sims. Rarities include 'The Mill Wheel: Winter' (1892) and 'Muleteer's Song' (1894, to verses from Cervantes's *Don Quixote*); Elgar subsequently reworked both for his 1896 cantata *King Olaf*, though in the event only the former made it into the published version (in the section entitled 'The Death of Olaf', to be precise). The Swiss soprano Nathalie de Montmollin receives stylish support from pianist Barry Collett (who also provides usefully detailed booklet notes), but her tone and vibrato are not the most ingratiating, and there are also occasional tuning issues to contend with. No matter, for the main contents alone, this is a release which has already afforded me much pleasure.

Andrew Achenbach

Enescu

Strigoi (Ghosts)^a. Pastorale fantaisie

^aRodica Vica sop ^aTiberius Simu ten

^aBogdan Baciu bar ^aAlin Anca bass Berlin Radio

Symphony Orchestra / Gabriel Bebeșelea

Capriccio © C5346 (56' • DDD • T/t)



Somewhere in the mists of legend, but not far from the eastern reaches of the

Danube, a king enlists a mystical seer to bring his dead beloved back to life. If you've spent any time in Romania, you'll have encountered the 19th-century poet Mihai Eminescu – every town has at least one street named after him. His verse is heady, gothic stuff, and you can see its appeal to Enescu, whose 1916 oratorio *Strigoi* ('Ghosts') plunges deep into Eminescu's lurid, heavily overcast imaginative world.

Or, at least, it nearly does. Enescu's piano sketches date from 1916 but were left incomplete. The version on this 'premiere recording' was assembled by Cornel Țăranu in the 1970s and orchestrated by Sabin Pautza more recently. It certainly sounds the part. Pautza has captured the sombre, intensely chromatic sound world of Enescu's near-contemporary Third Symphony, all sulphurous bass clarinet, baleful trombones and occasional flashes of steel-toothed brilliance.

While intensely atmospheric (conductor Gabriel Bebeșelea manages both tension and texture extremely well), *Strigoi* feels unbalanced; there's not much contrast over its oppressively dour 45-minute span. The soloists are all Romanian and they sing (and for large stretches, speak) Eminescu's words with real relish. Alin Anca has a splendidly sepulchral bass and tenor Tiberius Simu catches the heroic tone of King Arald.

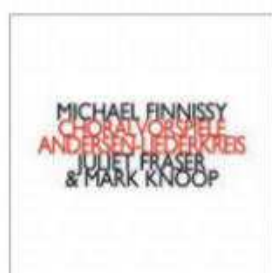
The other singers have very little to do, and the predominance of spoken narration (this is an oratorio without a chorus) is a constant reminder that Enescu never actually completed the piece (confusingly, the libretto and translation for Part 2 seems to include several verses that Enescu did not set). The surprisingly peppery *Pastorale fantaisie* of 1899 – which also appears to be a first recording – receives a full-blooded performance. If you're already an Enescu fan, you needn't hesitate. **Richard Bratby**

Finnissy

Choralvorspiele. Anderson-Liederkreis^a

^aJuliet Fraser sop ^aMark Knoop pf

hat[now]ART © HATNOWART212 (77' • DDD • T/t)



Mark Knoop (as soloist in the *Choralvorspiele*) and soprano Juliet Fraser

team up in two recent cycles by Michael Finnissy, composed in 2012 and 2016 respectively. Given the extent of the composer's solo piano output, the *Choralvorspiele* are perhaps easier to situate (within the discography, at any rate). From typically limpid beginnings the counterpoint gradually ramifies; there is often a single point of culmination in each movement, though variously situated (as the composer hints in the programme notes, some of the movements sound more like postludes than preludes). The piano-writing ranges from manic to stark: from the note-spinning of the fifth movement, reminiscent of the 'High' Baroque at its most obsessive, to, at the other extreme, the conclusion of the penultimate movement which consists of a single note, its repetitions coloured (unless I'm mistaken) by stopped notes and pedalling. One has come to take virtuosity as a given, but Knoop's handling of this passage, where there's nowhere to hide, is one of the most impressive things on this disc. (Needless to say, without the reams and skeins of what precedes it, such a passage would be far less affecting.)

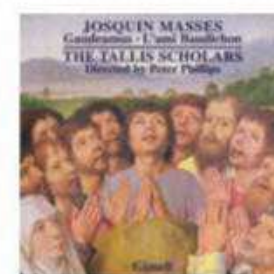
The *Andersen-Liederkreis* is a tougher proposition. Alternating Danish, English, and German, the texts are sometimes sung, sometimes spoken. (Just as Finnissy avoids setting chorales in the *Choralvorspiele*, so here he steers clear of the writer's famous tales in favour of his little-known poetry; this sideways look at his source material is typical.) What I cannot quite grasp is the intended relationship between text and 'accompaniment' (the term is unavoidably problematised). The answer varies from setting to setting but in some cases (such as 'The Soldier') the distancing effect, or rather its motivation, seems intractable. This might explain Fraser's strangely unresolved characterisations, as though the lyricism of Finnissy's models and his own ambivalent, mercurial stance were difficult to reconcile. **Fabrice Fitch**

Josquin

Missa Gaudeamus. Missa L'ami Baudichon

The Tallis Scholars / Peter Phillips

Gimell © CDGIM050 (67' • DDD • T/t)



The musical importance of Josquin Desprez (c1450/55-1521) cannot be

overstated, yet several of his Masses are still not well represented on record. This new release brings The Tallis Scholars' total to 14 and includes the seldom-heard *Missa*

α

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After exploring the baroque music of Ireland and Scotland in previous recordings, François Lazarevitch leads us in the footsteps of Henry Purcell, alternating instrumental dances with songs from the English countertenor Tim Mead. «O solitude», «What power art thou», «Strike the viol»... Alongside such well-known airs, this programme by les Musiciens de Saint-Julien, featuring the ensemble's special sound colours, represents a new piece in the jigsaw of their musical map of the United Kingdom, and their campaign to put folk elements back at the heart of art music.

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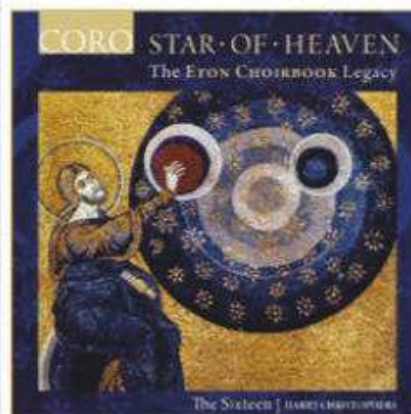
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This new seasonal offering captures the joy and sincerity of Christmas with works such as the plainsong chant *Veni, veni Emmanuel*, Lassus' polyphonic *Videntes stellam Magi* and Byrd's jubilant *This day Christ was born* - it's a perfect alternative to traditional carols for those wanting something a little different at Christmas.

Haydn Symphonies: Nos. 49 & 87

Handel and Haydn Society | Harry Christophers



COR16168

The latest release from Handel and Haydn Society brings together two of Haydn's symphonies, one from his *Sturm und Drang* days, and one of his later 'Paris' symphonies. Sandwiched between is Mozart's delightful *Sinfonia Concertante in E flat major for violin and viola* played by H+H's frey concertmaster, Aisslin Nosky and Max Mandel.

www.thesixteen.com



L'ami Baudichon. As ever, Peter Phillips and his singers bring confidence and elegance to Josquin's music; and, as Caroline Gill and I recently discussed (Classics Reconsidered, 12/16), the consistency of vision since their 1987 Josquin is remarkable.

This new album follows a familiar format: two Masses in contrasting styles, presented by an all-vocal consort of 8-10 singers. In fact, it's that very consistency of approach that is so useful when surveying Josquin's staggering output. In *Missa L'ami Baudichon*, often considered the earliest due to the Dufay-esque use of a fragmentary cantus firmus, it's quite amazing how much material Josquin builds around a tune as simple as 'Three blind mice'. Revisiting the earlier recording by Peter Urquhart and Capella Alamire (Dorian, 11/95) I am struck by the dominating tone of their instrumental cantus firmus (sackbut) compared to the lightness of Peter Phillips's tenors. As ever with The Tallis Scholars, interpretative gestures are subtle but flowing: listen for the deliciously well-controlled gush of excitement, a brass band climax in miniature, at Josquin's triumphal *Credo* ending, 'et vitam venture saeculi, Amen'. They find a wonderful sway in the garlands of polyphony and a sense of expectance in the tenors' long final note.

Conversely, *Missa Gaudeamus* is almost certainly a middle-period work, and I am charmed by how the opening of the plainchant model presents a joyfully wide rising interval which permeates the polyphonic texture. The Tallis Scholars allow much light to filter through Josquin's complex textures and they clearly delight in his beautifully spacious three-part setting of 'Pleni sunt caeli et terra gloria tua'. Their sound may have softened slightly with a new generation of singers but it suits *Missa Gaudeamus* particularly well. This disc is surely one of their best recent releases. **Edward Breen**

Liszt

'The Complete Songs, Vol 5'

An Edlita, S333. Comment, disaient-ils, S276 (first version). Du bist wie eine Blume, S287 (second version). Enfant, si j'étais roi, S283 (first version). Freudvoll und leidvoll, S280 (two versions). Gestorben war ich, S308. Hohe Liebe, S307. Jugendglück, S323. Die Lorelei, S273 (fourth version). Oh! quand je dors, S282 (first version). O lieb, so lang du lieben kannst, S298 (second version). S'il est un charmant gazon, S284 (first version). Über allen Gipfeln ist Ruh', S306 (first version). Die Zelle in Nonnenwerth, S274 (third version)

Allan Clayton *ten* Julius Drake *pf*

Hyperion © CDA68179 (63) • DDD • T/t



Julius Drake's survey of Liszt's complete songs reaches its fifth volume with a recital

by Allan Clayton, carefully tailored to his talents as both lyric tenor and vocal actor. In contrast to its predecessor, structured round the late songs, performed with careful restraint by Sasha Cooke (5/16), this is a disc of high drama and moody introversion, focused predominantly on Liszt's Weimar years (1848-61) and the period immediately preceding them. The parameters are effectively established at the outset with two contrasting settings of Goethe's 'Freudvoll und leidvoll', the first (1844) all soulful introspection, the second (1848) mercurial, impulsive and heated. The stylistic range of what follows is strikingly wide, as desire is undercut by irony and grand passions give way to stark reflections on time, age and mortality.

The choice of versions heightens the emotional pitch. In the fourth 'Lorelei' from 1860, with its weighty, turbulent piano-writing, Drake unleashes a virtuoso storm as the boat founders on the rocks and Clayton's rapt vocal line fragments into terrified, expressionist *parlando*. The Victor Hugo settings, meanwhile, come in their original 1842-44 versions, darker and more flamboyant – albeit less successful – than the more familiar revisions. Clayton sings 'Enfant, si j'étais roi' with devil-may-care bravado but Drake can't disguise the fact that the driven accompaniment, modified in the later version, sits uneasily with the text's irony. The first 'Comment disaient-ils', meanwhile, is something of a bravura showpiece, capped with a cadenza that pushes Clayton almost to his limits.

A willingness to take risks, however, has always been integral to his singing, and the dividends are often enormous. The high tessitura of 'O lieb, so lang du lieben kannst' proves taxing, but the resulting pressure in his tone also reminds us that this most familiar of Liszt's melodies is not so much a declaration of Romantic love as an urgent recommendation of sensuality as a means of warding off intimations of mortality. 'Die Zelle in Nonnenwerth' and 'Ich möchte hingehn', dramatic monologues in all but name and also haunted by thoughts of loss, decay and death, find him at his best in chilling performances in which sense and sound are fused in an intense expressive unit. There are also wonderful moments of lyrical reflection, though, and the way he sings 'Du bist wie eine Blume' with a poised

mezza voce is breathtaking. Drake, meanwhile, invests every phrase with weight and meaning, and is, as ever, outstanding. Another fine disc in an exceptional series. **Tim Ashley**

Mahler

Das Lied von der Erde

Magdalena Kožená *mez* Stuart Skelton *ten*

Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra /

Sir Simon Rattle

BR-Klassik © 900172 (64) • DDD

Recorded live at the Herkulesaal, Munich, January 25-27, 2018



It's amazing to think that Simon Rattle's previous recording of Mahler's late, great

symphony of song dates from over two decades ago. With Thomas Hampson as one of the soloists, that version joined the small number of recordings to take advantage of Mahler's alternative casting. This new live recording, happily, offers a mezzo (admittedly not quite the prescribed alto) instead, in the shape of Magdalena Kožená. Stuart Skelton tackles the tenor solos, a decade since his first recording them – coincidentally opposite Hampson.

But what is perhaps most immediately striking is the detail and brilliance of the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra's playing. Every flutter-tongued quiver and celesta-lined shiver in the score comes across with a vividness that outdoes the earlier CBSO recording. Rattle's own approach has matured noticeably in the interim, too, now pushing more to the extremes, more daringly plumbing the depths, allowing itself to linger on the bursts of autumnal sunlight that suddenly break out. Listen to the yearning gorgeousness we get in the central section of 'Das Trinklied vom Jammer der Erde' (from about the four-minute mark), for example – helped by terrific solo playing, from the cor anglais in particular. There's an especially melting, relaxed quality at the heart of 'Der Trunkene im Frühling', too.

Both moments are helped by Skelton's sensitivity. The voice is sounding a little less focused these days, perhaps – and lacks the steel of Peter Seiffert on Rattle's earlier recording – but he still makes a fine, handsome sound and offers something special in his moving reactions to the poetry. Kožená in her songs offers singing of supreme beauty. In fact, she sings almost too beautifully at times: she occasionally feels a little cool, and is not quite willing or able to indulge in the blank, vibrato-free



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Photo: Gabrieli, performing at ‘Music
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effects we get from some in 'Der Abschied', for example. But taken on its own terms this is artistry of the highest level, and ultimately deeply moving.

Despite Kožená's fine performance, though, in Mahler's vast final song, it's Rattle's achievement that arguably makes the strongest impression. The playing is again superb (particularly the solo oboe), and Rattle manages the half-hour span with masterful control, no better than in the desolate soundscapes of the middle section (from around 16'00"), where clarity and patience help to build a sense of devastatingly quiet, heavy power. Not a conventional *Lied*, perhaps, but a fascinating and beguiling one: highly recommended.

Hugo Shirley

Selected comparison:

CBSO, *Rattle* (2/97) (EMI/WARN) ➔ 556200-2

Schubert

Swansong (Schwanengesang), D957^a. On the River (Auf dem Strom), D943^b. The Shepherd on the Rock (Der Hirt auf dem Felsen), D965^c

^{bc}**Sophie Bevan** *sop* ^a**Sir John Tomlinson** *bass*

^c**Julian Bliss** *cl* ^b**Alec Frank-Gemmill** *hn*

Christopher Glynn *pf*

Signum © SIGCD550 (73' • DDD • T)



I was a little guarded perhaps in my reaction to Signum's release of 'Winter Journey'

(5/18), and for 'Swan Song' Jeremy Sams's translations offer a similar mixture of inventiveness and pragmatism in the face of an impossible task: the result is workable and admirable – often ingenious, occasionally jarring. The fact that we've Schubert's final not-quite song-cycle in English here, though, is unlikely to be the most controversial thing about the album.

Plenty of Wotans have sung these songs on record, but Bryn Terfel's early recording and Hans Hotter's date from their prime – as does James Rutherford's fine recent BIS recording (6/16). John Tomlinson, by contrast, hung up his eyepatch and spear a decade ago, and no one could pretend he is in his prime – or, it's fair to say, anywhere near it.

And I'm afraid to say the singing on this disc is largely unacceptable. We hear a once magnificent voice running on fumes, its owner doing what he can to repurpose its deficiencies – the wobble, the unvarnished hollowness of timbre, the high notes sounding as though they're being lifted effortfully and precariously into place – to expressive ends. His 'Serenade'

could hardly sound less as though it's 'softly flowing through the moonlight', while the long phrases in the final minutes of 'Far away' will make you wince.

Where one might expect some recompense in 'Atlas' or 'The Doppelgänger' (Sams doesn't try to find an English equivalent), the voice just can't fill out the big notes in the way it needs to. As always with Tomlinson there are plus points. His diction remains a marvel (I enjoyed his bustling way with the nifty text for 'Farewell') and the voice still has a sweet spot in its range where its easy volume is impressive – but it's not enough.

The shock as we jump to Sophie Bevan's sparkingly youthful soprano for the two songs with instrumental obbligato is a big one. Here, though, we get something of the reverse: for all her vocal allure, you'll find yourself struggling to pick out many of the words in 'On the River' or 'The Shepherd on the Rock', where she also loses some polish in the final sections. Fine contributions from Julian Bliss and Alec Frank-Gemmill, and Christopher Glynn's playing is excellent throughout, but to call this an uneven disc hardly covers it.

Hugo Shirley

Tulev

Flow, my tears^a. I said, Who are You? – He said, You^b. Legatissimo^c. Magnificat^d. Suvine Vihm (Summer Rain)^e. Tanto gentile^f

^d**Ieva Ezeriete**, ^d**Inga Martinsone** *sops* ^b**Ka Bo Chan** *counterten* ^b**Virgo Veldi** *asax* ^b**Age Juurikas** *positive org* ^{cd}**Heigo Rosin, Vambola Krigul** *perc* ^{adef}**Latvian**

Radio Choir; ^{bd}**Tallinn Chamber Orchestra** /

^{abdef}**Kaspars Putniņš**

Naxos (M) 8 573735 (61' • DDD • T/t)



The Estonian Toivo Tulev (b1958) is one of the most intriguing figures currently

working in a country that is not lacking in interesting composers. This collection brings together six works written in the last 12 years, all of them except one for vocal forces. The exception is *Legatissimo* (2011) for percussion, which works, as Eugene Birman's elucidative notes explain, as a kind of counterweight to the longest work here, the *Magnificat* (2013), which brings together percussion and choir.

Tulev's work is frequently dramatic and stylistically plural, though I do not mean by this that there is any lack of a personal voice. It is rather that his music often ranges through expressive extremes – the *Magnificat* is a fine example, combining skittering, fragmented lines with reflective

modal washes to produce an unusually tense setting of this text. *Tanto gentile* (2010), a chromatic, contrapuntal setting of Dante, makes extensive use of overtone singing, something which the Latvian Radio Choir, for whom the work was written, have studied in depth. The most enigmatic work here is perhaps *Flow, my tears* (2007), which combines words from the Dowland song with texts from the Holy Week liturgy, the tears of the title gradually becoming equated with the blood of Christ. It strikes me as being somewhat forced, whereas the sheer oddness of *I said, Who are You? – He said, You*, from the same year, is utterly compelling, as is the performance, featuring countertenor Ka Bo Chan and saxophonist Virgo Veldi as soloists.

The stars of the recording are of course the Latvian Radio Choir and their conductor Kaspars Putniņš, who just seem to get better and better. From the first notes of the first track, *Suvine Vihm* (2006), you know you can expect luminous perfection, and that is exactly what this intriguing, provocative recording delivers.

Ivan Moody

'Bésame Mucho'

Barroso Aquarela do Brasil **Benavides** Sombras **Castro** La pollera colorá **Díaz** Caballo viejo **Faró**

Si vas para Chile **Fernández** Guantanamera **Gardel** Volver **Gieco** Sólo le pido a Dios **Granda**

José Antonio **Isella** Canción con todos **Jiménez** Amanecí entre tus brazos **Méndez** Cucurrucucú paloma **Mili** El yerberito moderno **Polo Campos**

Cuando llora mi guitarra **Portillo de la Luz**

Contigo en la distancia **Ramírez** La malagueña

Soto El tamalito **Velázquez** Bésame mucho

Juan Diego Flórez *ten* various artists

Sony Classical © 19075 82294-2 (72' • DDD • T/t)



The most successful numbers on Juan Diego Flórez's previous album of

popular Latin American songs (Decca, 10/06) were the handful where the Peruvian tenor was backed by a small ensemble. In those, his singing sounded freely expressive; in the rest, however, the singer's – and the songs' – spirit was squashed by the Fort Worth Symphony's accompaniment.

Thankfully Flórez does away with the orchestra entirely on this new collection. Most of the arrangements are quite minimal, in fact, and those with slightly more elaborate instrumentation are thoughtfully realised, like 'Contigo en la distancia', where the nightclub atmosphere,

GRAMOPHONE *Focus*

FROM EUROPE TO PERU

Lindsay Kemp enjoys two sumptuous and lavishly presented projects from Hespèrion XXI and Jordi Savall



Jordi Savall coordinates irresistible music-making from his Hespèrion XXI musicians

'Bailar Cantando'

'Fiesta mestiza en el Perú'

Music from the Codex Trujillo (c1780)

La Capella Reial de Catalunya;

Hespèrion XXI / Jordi Savall

Alia Vox (E) AVSA9927 (70' • DDD/DSD • T/t)

'Musica Nova'

'Harmonie des nations, 1500-1700'

Anonymous Galliarda la Traditora. Pavana

del Re. Saltarello. El Todescho **Brade** Ein

schottisch Tanz **Cabanilles** Corrente italiana

M-A Charpentier Concert pour quatre violes,

H545 **Dowland** The King of Denmark Galliard.

Lacrimae Pavan **A Gabrieli** Ricercar VII

Gibbons In nomine a 4 **Grillo** Capriccio V

Legrenzi Sonata sesta **Marini** Passacaglia a 4

Parabosco Ricercare XIV, 'Da pacem' **Pedro de**

Araujo Consonancias de 1º tom **Pedro de San**

Lorenzo Folia **Scheidt** Allemande XVI. Courant

dolorosa. Galliard battaglia XXI. Paduan V

Hespèrion XXI / Jordi Savall *va da gamba*

Alia Vox (E) AVSA9926 (79' • DDD/DSD)




Both these releases from Hespèrion XXI are revisitings of repertoire they have explored before, but in neither is there the slightest whiff of rehash; both are as fresh as you could wish. This is especially so in the case of 'Bailar Cantando', which

presents the 20 pieces that are the entire musical content of the Codex Trujillo, a massive nine-volume report on the customs and lifestyles of the *mestizo* (or mixed-race) peoples of the colonial Peruvian city of Trujillo, compiled in the 1780s on the order of the local (Spanish) bishop. Jordi Savall first encountered this fascinating manuscript many years ago but it was only after meeting the musicians of the Mexico-based Tembembe Ensamble Continuo in 2006 that he felt ready to include two of its pieces on 'Folías Criollas' (A/10), and only now that he has tackled the entire collection, enlisting Tembembe's support again to help him 'guarantee the works' essential spirit and style, which is both popular and refined, historical and yet very much alive in the present'.

There's no denying that, or that the experiment has worked. No one listening to these sweetly elegant pieces would bother themselves with their historical context for long, so winning is their timeless South American spirit – a benign mixture of Spanish, Amerindian and African aesthetics. To melodies simple in contour and harmony but deliciously complex in rhythm, the lyrics (mainly in Spanish, but also in indigenous tongues such as Quechuan or Mochica) sing of the pains of love, rail against the harshness of the pressgang, obliquely recall the execution by the Spanish of the last Inca king, celebrate the baby Jesus or solemnly honour the Mother of God.

Savall's orchestrations draw from the manuscript's watercolour illustrations (some of which are reproduced in the booklet), and mix bowed and plucked strings (Andrew Lawrence-King's harp making many telling contributions) with winds that encompass fruity dulcian and cackling cornett, and percussion that includes an effectively used horse's jawbone. They sound just the part, as does the stylish singing, and although there isn't any dancing it certainly isn't hard to visualise some. The audience reaction has been edited out of this concert recording but it all sounds like a gently joyous occasion, like some long-remembered summer night under the stars. Irresistible.

'Musica Nova' takes its title from a collection of *ricercars* published in Venice in 1540, even though only one of the pieces here (a delicately churchy *Ricercare* by Hieronimus Parabosco) comes from it. Instead the disc explores the concept of a 'new music' which – whether with origins in either vocal polyphony or dance music – was to be put in the hands of serious instrumental ensembles such as the consort of viols. What is more, Savall follows the idea beyond the expected consort repertoire of Dowland and Gibbons or the solemn dances of Scheidt, sidelines the arrival of the less polyphonically conceived genres of the Baroque and takes things up as far as the end of the 17th century, where we find Legrenzi sonatas, a Charpentier suite and Iberian composers implicitly inviting viols to help themselves to their contrapuntal organ pieces.

If that sounds like a slightly vague idea to get your head round, it is. But once you stop worrying about it, the good news is that this is an immensely enjoyable listen, its music both ravishing and substantial in the hands of these experienced performers. Savall makes no attempt to hide that they have recorded most of its music before, instead identifying the project as an excuse to celebrate over 50 years of working with it. Thus the best way to consume it is to sit back, treat it as the concert it once was and revel in the sound of viols, lute and percussion played with beauty and wisdom, and in perfect balance. So maybe I did find Charpentier's *Concert pour quatre parties de violes* a little sluggish, but I'd defy anyone not to succumb to the grinding inner lines of Dowland's *Lacrimae*, the peaty soulfulness of William Brade's *Schottisch Tanz*, the noble gravity of Scheidt's *Paduan V* or the guitar-driven, drum-rumbling adrenalin rush of his *Galliard battaglia XXI*. 

conjured by a reverberantly miked piano, aptly connects this Cuban song from the 1940s to its counterparts in the Great American Songbook.

Flórez is very much at home in this repertoire, for the most part, and particularly in the songs from his native Peru. He gets the speech-song quality of the folkloric 'José Antonio' just right, for instance, so the phrases move as gracefully as José's trusty steed. The free-form structure of 'Cuando llora mi guitarra' depends upon the singer's ability to convey heartache as spontaneous outpouring, and Flórez does this brilliantly. Perhaps 'El tamalito' is too elegantly delivered for a song about a street vendor selling tamales, but even if we're served these on a silver platter, as it were, they're still delicious.

There are a few songs that don't quite work. 'Aquarela do Brasil' is a breezy number that requires 'a swing that makes you sway', as the lyric itself tells us; *aquarela* means watercolour, but Flórez's full-throated, rhythmically heavy account suggests oils. And the festive 'Guantanamera', 'La pollera colora' and 'El yerberito moderno' are somewhat stilted for party music. I was also puzzled by his accent in Gardel's tango 'Volver', with its bizarre mix of Argentine and Spanish consonants.

These are the exceptions, however. Most of the programme is enjoyable, and a few songs are absolute knockouts. I was stirred by his fervour in the anthemic 'Solo le pido a Dios', shivered at the catch in his throat in 'Amaneci entre tus brazos' (and the way he lingers on the final 's'), and I'm certain that in 'Cucurrucucú paloma' his long-held notes and intimate bouts of falsetto would bring the house down in recital.

Listening to 'Bésame Mucho' alongside Flórez's earlier album, his tone may have lost some of its lightness and ease, perhaps, but its radiant tonal sheen remains a joy.

Andrew Farach-Colton

'Himmelsmusik'

Ahle Bleib bei uns, denn es will Abend werden^a

Anonymous Chiaccona a 4 J Christoph Bach

Ach, dass ich Wassers g'nug hätte^b JS Bach

Komm, süsser Tod, komm, sel'ge Ruh, BWV478^b

Bertali Sonata a 6 Bütner Ich suchte des Nachts in meinem Bette^c Erlebach Kommt, ihr Stunden, macht mich frei^b Ritter O amantissime sponse^c

Schütz Erbarm dich mein, o Herre Gott, SWV447^c. Von Gott will ich nicht lassen, SWV366^d Theile Gott, hilf mir^b. Der Sionitin

Wiegenlied^e Tunder Ein kleines Kindelein^c

acde Celine Scheen sop abde Philippe Jaroussky counterten e Jésus Rodil ten de Dingle Yandell bass

L'Arpeggiata / Christina Pluhar theorbo

Erato © 9029 56340-0 (75' • DDD)



L'Arpeggiata are the ensemble with the curl in the middle of their forehead: when they

are good they are very, very good – energetic, stylish, disarmingly original – but when they are bad ...

There have been more bad days than good in the studio recently. Neither 'Händel Goes Wild' (10/17) nor 'Music for a While' (5/14) had much of value to say, steering away from the sly anachronisms and witty stylistic collisions of the period band's early recordings and heading full speed towards crossover at its wilful worst. Thankfully, with 'Himmelsmusik' we find the group back on solid musical ground, albeit terra incognita.

Italy has always been the ensemble's musical home. Forays to Spain and South America have always led them back to Monteverdi, Cavalli, Merula and their contemporaries, while northern Europe has remained almost entirely unexplored. With 'Himmelsmusik' they change that, following the Italian style on its journey north to Germany in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, travelling not just from one nation to another but also from opera house to church.

In a neat narrative twist the disc ends with JS Bach and the whitewashed Lutheran beauty of *Komm, süsser Tod* (performed with exquisite restraint by Philippe Jaroussky) – a musical destination that seems almost impossible from the vantage point of the highly perfumed, barely sacred songs by Christian Ritter, Johann Christoph Bach and Johann Rudolf Ahle that dominate the programme. Heady as the Song of Solomon (blink and you'd swear it was *Poppea*), these languishing love songs and laments may be directed at spiritual objects but their spirit is very much the earthly, the secular, the operatic.

Jaroussky and soprano Celine Scheen divide the solo numbers between them, occasionally coming together for duets or small ensembles (deftly supported by tenor Jésus Rodil and bass Dingle Yandell). The two are well matched, and the results are wonderfully rich and unexpectedly sensual, even if Jaroussky's vocal mannerisms – the expressive portamentos and pitch-bendings – have become a little ubiquitous. Instrumental numbers have all the group's signature lightness of touch and depth of colour, and the improvisatory freedom and sway of an anonymous *Chiaccona* is vintage L'Arpeggiata. Alexandra Coghlan

'The Liberation of the Gothic'

Ashwell Missa Ave Maria

Browne Salve regina. Stabat mater

Graindelavoix / Björn Schmelzer

Glossa © GCDP32115 (80' • DDD • T/t)



Given the seeming reluctance of continental ensembles to tackle

early Tudor polyphony, one must applaud Graindelavoix for taking on a style entirely new to their repertoire.

Ironically, two of the works heard here have been recorded before by the Huelgas Ensemble, albeit on different recordings (Thomas Ashwell's Mass over 10 years ago – Harmonia Mundi, 3/08 – and John Browne's *Stabat mater* about five – DHM, 8/13). Those readings scored relatively low on the scale of 'Van Nevelisms' (those creative licences that either intrigue or infuriate, depending on one's viewpoint), and the same goes, broadly speaking, for the 'Schmelzerisms' that make up Graindelavoix's house style. The 'Corsican goatherd' brand of vocal timbre is somewhat attenuated if not absent altogether, and the microtonal inflections are less distracting than they have been in the past. If the approach to ornamentation doesn't always convince, one must still acknowledge their willingness to experiment in this direction, given how few ensembles do. Above all one is drawn to the ensemble's tone, uncommonly deep, rich, absorbing in itself, and departing significantly from the treble-dominated spectrum that is so prevalent with English-speaking ensembles in this repertoire.

Perhaps the most striking departure is the noticeably slower tempos. Those who find these strange compared with previous interpretations (particularly of the Browne motets) should note that information regarding absolute tempos is virtually non-existent for this period. The only objective test is the effect that tempo choices have on the music. The slowing-down of details brings out the internal rubato that Schmelzer encourages between his singers, which is particularly effective in the Mass and the *Salve regina*; it is perhaps less satisfying in the *Stabat mater*, whose dramatic potential and rhythmic energy seem a touch undersold. But, given how broadly similar performances of this music can seem, a resolutely alternative viewpoint is to be welcomed.

Fabrice Fitch

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'Requiem'

'The Pity of War'

Butterworth Six Songs from A Shropshire Lad
Mahler Des Knaben Wunderhorn – Revelge; Der Tambours'g'sell; Wo die schönen Trompeten blasen
Stephan Ich will dir singen ein Hohelied
Weill Four Walt Whitman Songs

Ian Bostridge *ten* **Antonio Pappano** *pf*

Warner Classics © 9029 56615-6 (58' • DDD • T/t)



'How', Ian Bostridge asks in a booklet note for 'Requiem: The Pity of War', 'might

one reflect the experience and significance of the conflict of 1914 to 1918 in a song recital?' The idea of programming a recital to mark the centenary of the Armistice evolved, he tells us, from his experience of singing Britten's *War Requiem*, though the task he set himself, he soon realised, would be difficult. The immediate artistic response to the First World War was primarily literary, and few song composers tackled the conflict head-on. His eventual solution was to approach the subject to some extent obliquely, partly through works of prophecy and retrospection that relate the First World War to conflicts before and since, and partly through the inclusion of composers whose lives and careers were cut short in the trenches.

His starting point – and the recital's eventual end point – was the military songs from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, with their nightmarish intimations of fatality and trauma. *A Shropshire Lad* is haunted by memories of British losses in the Boer War, which in turn poignantly anticipate Butterworth's own death on the Somme in 1916. Turning aside from conflict to contemplate a world of mystico-erotic transcendence, *Ich will dir singen ein Hohelied*, beautiful yet sad, was one of the last works Rudi Stephan completed before he was shot on the Russian front in 1915. Weill's *Four Walt Whitman Songs*, meanwhile, were composed shortly after the US's entry into the Second World War and survey the tragedies and victories of the American Civil War in sometimes brutal music that gazes back over Weill's newly found Broadway lyricism towards the inflammatory style of his Berlin years.

Bostridge and Antonio Pappano are on superb form here, carefully responsive to style and mood, yet striving throughout for unsparing immediacy of expression. Stephan's taxing vocal lines push Bostridge to his limits in places, though the atmosphere of sensual introversion is finely sustained. *A Shropshire Lad* is all half-tones

and hushed retrospection as the shadows gradually darken towards the finality of the closing song. Weill's Whitman cycle opens in a mood of implacable anger, though the emotional climax – depicting a family's numbed grief on receiving terrible news from the front – is both quiet and shockingly intense. The *Wunderhorn* songs, meanwhile, find Bostridge at his most expressionist, deploying unearthly *pianissimos* in 'Wo die schönen Trompeten blasen' as the distant fanfares seem to echo round him into eternity (Pappano's playing is exceptional here), and letting his voice rise to a terrified, self-lacerating shriek at the climax of 'Der Tambours'g'sell'. A disc of great power and intelligence, it's both haunting and undeniably strong. **Tim Ashley**

'There's a Place for Us'

Bernstein 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue – Take care of this house. Candide – Glitter and be gay. Songfest – A Julia de Burgos. West Side Story – Somewhere
S Foster Jeanie with the light brown hair
Golijov Lúa descolorida
RI Gordon Stars. Will there really be a morning?
Stravinsky The Rake's Progress – No word from Tom
Theofanidis The Cows of Apollo – Maia's Aria
Villa-Lobos Bachianas Brasileiras No 5 – Aria (Cantilena). Floresta do Amazonas – Canção de amor; Melodia sentimental

Nadine Sierra *sop*

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra / Robert Spano
 DG © 483 5004GH (67' • DDD • T)



Why does everything nowadays have to be marketed with an angle, a message?

There are no more recital discs, just albums. That's a way of connecting the classical and pop worlds – I see that. But do we really have to keep repeating the mantra that opera is for everyone even if most of the numbers on the 'album' in question are songs or show tunes? Nadine Sierra is a young American lyric soprano of Puerto Rican and Portuguese extraction and in times when diversity is a hot topic I can see why she would be encouraged to send the message of 'inclusiveness' with this, her first solo recording. The booklet note (by one Aaron Grad) is peppered with 'right-on' quotes about the universality of music and its power to transcend social and racial divides, to heal and to unite. Very Bernsteinian ideals (he features heavily in the collection). But an accompanying biography would have been nice, too, if only to give us more of a flavour of what this young artist has been up to thus far in her career.

Her choices are individual and intriguing. There is Villa-Lobos – the familiar Aria from *Bachianas Brasileiras* No 5, along with two other beautiful and less familiar songs. The Argentinian composer Osvaldo Golijov also features along with Americans Ricky Ian Gordon and Christopher Theofanidis – a new name to me – whose opera *The Cows of Apollo* apparently featured a break-out role for Sierra. 'Maia's Aria' from that opera certainly makes a dramatic and intense impression: a kind of 11 o'clock number towards the climax of this recital. But it also highlights a failing evident throughout the selections: words. Sierra's bright and appealing soprano has a great facility for brilliance and the coloratura pyrotechnics in numbers like Anne Truelove's aria 'No word from Tom' from Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress* and 'Glitter and be gay' from Bernstein's *Candide* clearly hold no fears for her. But even where words are audible (and too many aren't), she makes little of them. Not just their sense and sentiment but their sound too. I don't get much here beyond a rather generalised respect for them.

She clearly has no idea how to convey the comic irony of Cunegonde's subverted 'jewel song', failing to use the coloratura to convey her lust for the intoxication of sparkly things and, in the central 'melodrama', the enjoyment of her misery. Nor does she seem to connect with the sentiments of Alan Jay Lerner's marvellous lyric for the big ballad from Bernstein's disastrous *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue*, 'Take care of this house'. I'm sure she appreciates the metaphor (the White House as a symbol of democracy – those were the days – and 'the hope for us all') but communicating it in a way that doesn't sound merely 'arch' appears to elude her. She has an exceptionally telling low register for a lyric coloratura but she fails to exploit its potential in numbers like this. It's all a bit one-colour.

In short, I enjoy the sound she makes in numbers like the two gorgeous Ricky Ian Gordon settings, particularly 'Will there really be a morning' (Emily Dickinson), but even where she is singing in Spanish in 'A Julia de Burgos' – Bernstein's feisty setting of the poet's hymn to womanhood from *Songfest* (a shrewd choice) – it could do with even more attitude. It doesn't help that the accompaniments from the RPO under Robert Spano are so nondescript.

Edward Seckerson

WHAT NEXT?

Do you have a favourite piece of music and want to explore further? Our monthly feature suggests some musical journeys that venture beyond the most familiar works, with some recommended versions. This month, **David Threasher**'s point of departure is ...

Haydn's 'Military' Symphony (1794)

Several of Haydn's symphonies were given names – usually not by the composer himself. Symphony No 100's is fairly straightforward, referring to the slow movement, which takes the form of a march bedecked with glittering Turkish percussion. Such 'Turkish' sounds enjoyed a vogue in 18th-century Vienna, as the centuries-old conflict between the Habsburgs and the Ottomans (with their elite military forces known as janissaries) began to turn in the favour of the Western powers. All things Turkish – or even pretend-Turkish – became the rage in the imperial capital. Haydn took the style to London in his 100th Symphony, the eighth of the group of 12 composed for the city in the 1790s. Marc Minkowski's splendid recording is full of thrills and surprises, and nicely scaled to Haydn's music of this productive decade.

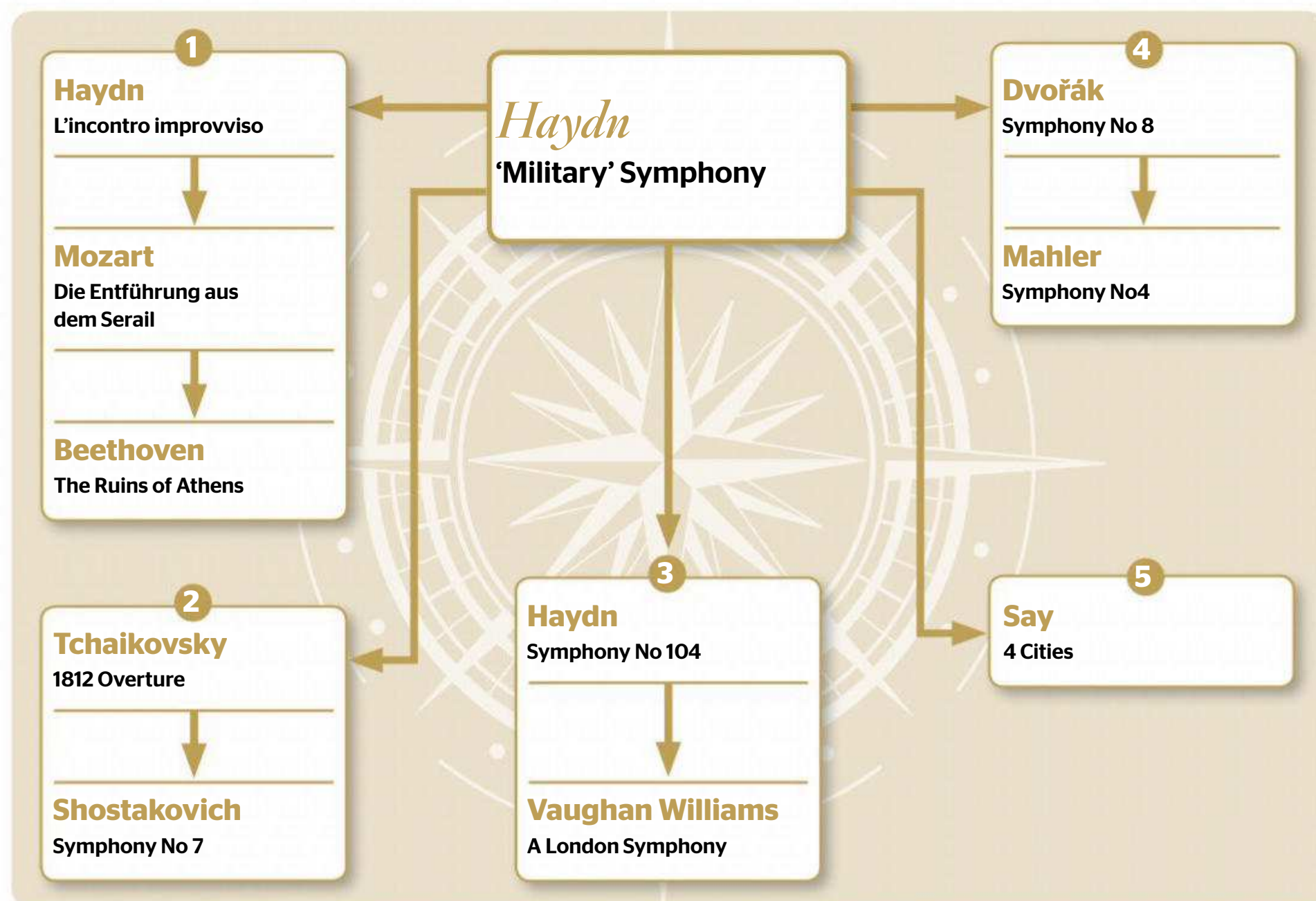
● Les Musiciens du Louvre, Grenoble / Marc Minkowski (Naïve, 9/10)

1 *The Turks in Austria*

Haydn *L'incontro improvviso* (1775) Haydn's 1775 opera *L'incontro improvviso* had already contained an abduction by pirates, a scene in a seraglio, a character called Osmin and an overture bedecked with Turkish percussion. Not only that, but Act 1 contains a trio of staggering beauty for three ladies – and an orchestra coloured by a pair of cors anglais – which Mozart must surely have had in mind when he came to compose parts of *Così fan tutte* and *Die Zauberflöte*.

● Claes-Håkon Ahnsjö *ten* Linda Zoghby *sop* Margaret Marshall *sop* Della Jones *mez et al*; Lausanne CO / Antal Dorati (Philips, 9/80)

Mozart *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (1782) Mozart provided perhaps the most famous of all operatic treatments of Turkish subjects, replete with janissary choruses and marches, piccolo, high (and low)





The Ottoman janissary musicians that inspired Haydn's Symphony No 100

clarinets and, of course, Turkish percussion: bass drum, cymbals and triangle. It was after a performance of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* that the Emperor Joseph II is alleged to have said to Mozart, 'That is too fine for my ears – there are too many notes.'

● Robin Johannsen *sop* Mari Eriksmoen *sop* et al; RIAS Chamber Choir; Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin / René Jacobs (Harmonia Mundi, 10/15)

Beethoven The Ruins of Athens (1811) Beethoven wrote this incidental music for August von Kotzebue's play *Die Ruinen von Athen* in 1811. Minerva, daughter of Zeus, awakens from her 2000-year slumber to find Ancient Greece overrun by the Turks; cue choruses of dervishes and the irresistible Turkish March, which has enjoyed a life outside its original circumstance, not only in a piano arrangement by Liszt but also in the *Warhammer* video games and as a demonstration piece on a thousand cheap electronic keyboards.

● Anima Eterna / Jos van Immerseel (Zig-Zag Territoires, 6/08)

2 More military music

Tchaikovsky Overture '1812' (1880) Beethoven was composing against the backdrop of Napoleon's conquest of Europe, producing the potboiler *Wellingtons Sieg*, for example, but Tchaikovsky wrote from the distance of the 70th anniversary of the Battle of Borodino – the conflict at the heart of *War and Peace*. Russian national songs vie with the Marseillaise in this evergreen overture, celebrating the Russian defence of Moscow against the French. The tunes are all wrong, though: Bonaparte had banned the Marseillaise in 1805 and 'God save the Tsar' hadn't been written by 1812; patriotic Russians would instead have sung a nationalistic verse to the tune of 'God save the Queen'.

● Minneapolis SO / Antal Dorati (Decca, 9/56^R)

Shostakovich Symphony No 7, 'Leningrad' (c1939-40) The Germans failed to heed the warnings of Napoleon's failed adventure on the Eastern front and laid siege to Leningrad (St Petersburg) for nearly 900 days during the Second World War. Shostakovich, the pre-eminent musical chronicler of Soviet life as well as a volunteer fireman

during the siege, composed into the Seventh Symphony the advance of the German forces upon the city, a terrifying, drum-battered bolero that builds inexorably until the unmistakable moment when the arrival of the invaders is announced.

● BBC NOW / Mark Wigglesworth (BIS, 8/97)

3 Symphonies for London

Haydn Symphony No 104, 'London' (1795) Of the dozen symphonies Haydn composed for his two trips to the English capital between 1791 and 1795, the epithet *London* has attached itself only to this one, the last and possibly finest of the 12. Why this one and not any of the others? The reason is lost in the mists of time but may be something to do with the similarity of the finale's theme to a street call of 'hot cross buns' or some such. But what does that matter in music so fine?

● Heidelberg SO / Thomas Fey (Hänssler Classic, 5/18)

Vaughan Williams A London Symphony (1912-13) Vaughan Williams insisted that, for all its depictions of the chimes of Big Ben or street calls from city vendors, his second symphony should be considered 'Symphony by a Londoner'. It was intended, he said, 'to be self-expressive, and must stand or fall as "absolute" music'. Go for Richard Hickox's pioneering reconstruction of the original version, a quarter of an hour longer, more searching and darker than the final revision of 1936, and *Gramophone's* Recording of the Year in 2001.

● LSO / Richard Hickox (Chandos, 7/01)

4 Symphonies in G

Dvořák Symphony No 8 (1889) The key of G major was a common one for Haydn and Mozart but its pastoral associations did not appeal so much to composers of the 19th century – and, indeed, gave rise to the distinctly un-pastoral sounds of VW's *London Symphony*. Dvořák took the straightforward openness of G major back to Bohemia's woods and fields in his Eighth Symphony, making for maximum contrast with its predecessor, the stormy, Wagnerian Symphony No 7 in D minor (itself composed for London, although, inexplicably, it was the Eighth that became known as the 'English' Symphony).

● Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra / Mariss Jansons (RCO Live, 7/10)

Mahler Symphony No 4 (1899-1900) Ten years on from Dvořák's Eighth, Mahler's Fourth offers a different sort of pastoralism, a passage from idyllic childhood happiness in the opening movement to the child's vision of heaven in the finale. Although nominally in G, the symphony opens in B minor and ends in restful E major. Along the way the Grim Reaper appears with his shonky violin in the devilish Scherzo and we encounter 'a tombstone on which was carved an image of the departed ... in eternal sleep'. As ever in Mahler, no matter how idyllic the situation, death is never far away.

● Budapest Festival Orchestra / Iván Fischer (Channel Classics, 4/09)

5 A true taste of Turkey

Say 4 Cities (2012) Eighteenth-century Vienna's ersatz turquerie is all very well but what about the real thing? The controversial pianist Fazıl Say was born in Ankara and maintains a parallel career as a productive composer. The four cities depicted in his *4 Cities* are Sivas, gently caressed by desert winds; Bodrum, evidently Turkey's answer to New Orleans; Ankara itself, ageless and enchanting; and Hopa, represented by just about the most exciting thing ever conceived for piano and cello.

● Nicolas Altstaedt; Fazıl Say (Warner Classics, 5/17)

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Opera



David Vickers enjoys a Salieri rarity from Les Talens Lyriques:

'The playing abounds with incisive theatrical momentum and an affinity for gracefully shaped harmonic details' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 99**



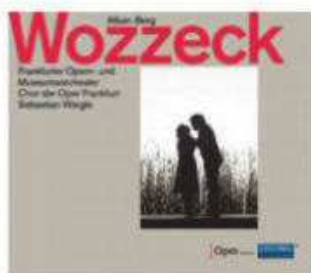
Mark Pullinger hears Dmitri Hvorostovsky live from Vienna:

'Prince Yeletsky in The Queen of Spades was the perfect role for him: aristocratic, luscious, poised and noble' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 101**

Berg

Wozzeck

Audun Iversen bar.....Wozzeck
Claudia Mahnke mez.....Marie
Vincent Wolfsteiner ten.....Drum Major
Martin Mitternutzner ten.....Andres
Peter Bröndler ten.....Captain
Alfred Reiter bass.....Doctor
Martin Wölfel counterten.....Idiot
Thomas Faulkner bass.....Apprentice I
Iurii Samoilov bar.....Apprentice II
Katharina Magiera contr.....Margret
Edward Jumatate sngr.....Marie's Son
Chorus of Frankfurt Opera; Frankfurt Opera and Museum Orchestra / Sebastian Weigle
 Oehms © ② OC974 (93) • DDD
 Recorded live, June-July 2016
 Includes synopsis and German libretto



Unseen except in a copiously illustrated booklet, Christof

Loy's staging nevertheless exerts a powerful influence over this audio-only production. Any listener with basic German could listen without a text to hand (just as well in this case; Oehms supplies a libretto but no translation) and quickly get inside Wozzeck's head. Everyone on stage puts the words first – often by speaking, shouting and shrieking as much as singing.

The claustrophobia which boxed in previous issues of Wagner and Strauss from the same source works here to advantage. While Decca and DG captured the Vienna Philharmonic under Böhm, Abbado and Dohnányi revelling in the score's waltz rhythms, much of its teeming inner life was lost or garbled. Not here. The ghostly sonata form at play in Act 2's confrontation between Wozzeck and Marie reaches a conclusion of positively Brahmsian inevitability. Neither Sebastian Weigle nor Teodor Currentzis (BelAir, 12/12) lose out in such historical comparisons, and the muscular heft of the Frankfurt orchestra's

core sonority is a compelling, perhaps more idiomatic alternative to the glassy polish of the Bolshoi players.

Audun Iversen sings the title-role in the manner of Gerhaher more than Goerne, as a creature of numbed dignity gradually roused to fury and driven to insanity. Rather as with good stagings of *Figaro*, he and Weigle (and Loy) convey that we have landed in the thick of a drama long in progress and ever accelerating towards its end. His three enemies in authority are nicely differentiated – there is even a coarse streak of Ländler-like humour to their exchanges – and Claudia Mahnke invests Marie with powerful erotic allure and pride. 'Better a knife in my body than a hand on me': this and other defining lines hit home. For a CD-only *Wozzeck* it's a compelling modern alternative to the uniquely unsettling experience afforded by Boulez on Sony, but Loy's production deserves to be seen as well as heard. **Peter Quantrill**

Selected comparison:

Boulez (2/67^R) (SONY) 88697 44619-2

Britten

Billy Budd

Jacques Imbrailo bar.....Billy Budd
Toby Spence ten.....Captain Vere
Brindley Sherratt bass.....John Claggart
Thomas Oliemans bar.....Mr Redburn
David Soar bass.....Mr Flint
Torben Jürgens bass.....Lt Ratcliffe
Christopher Gillett ten.....Red Whiskers
Duncan Rock bar.....Donald
Clive Bayley bass.....Danser
Sam Furness ten.....Novice
Francisco Vas ten.....Squeak
Manel Esteve bar.....Bosun
Chorus and Orchestra of the Teatro Real, Madrid / Ivor Bolton

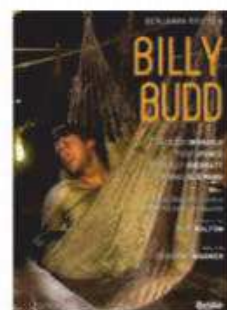
Stage director **Deborah Warner**

Video director **Jérémy Cuvillier**

BelAir Classiques © BAC154; © BAC554
 (174' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS-HD MA5.1, DD5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live, February 2017

Includes synopsis



Companies releasing DVDs of Britten's operas must be glad they do not have to look over their shoulders at

the composer's own recordings, as they do with his historic audio sets. It is a shame, though, that nobody took the initiative to film any of his operas with their original casts and productions (*Owen Wingrave*, conceived for television, is a special case).

This *Billy Budd* from the Teatro Real in Madrid offers a stripped-down, predominantly abstract view of the opera. The stage looks panoramic here, opening up vistas as wide as the 'endless sea'. A tangle of rigging is the only permanent feature, suggesting a symbolic prison formed of chains of rope. On this empty expanse the intimate scenes cannot help but work less well and Deborah Warner, the director, has created a few logistical problems for herself. The originality of Britten's *coup de théâtre* when Captain Vere goes to tell Billy Budd the court's verdict is lost when Billy is visible on stage throughout, leaving the two of them to gaze at each other with meaningful looks as the mighty series of tonic chords plays out.

The strength of the production is its universality. The time and place are barely pinned down, despite costumes that are present-day, and there is no attempt to plump for one of the opera's possible interpretations, such as a Christian allegory, over any of the others. Incidentally, what a wonderfully many-layered libretto Forster and Crozier delivered to Britten (a shame that the former is listed as 'Foster' by the on-screen credits).

The acting works so well in close-up that it is possible to follow this performance almost like a film. Jacques Imbrailo heads the cast in the title-role, as he did for the Glyndebourne DVD (Opus Arte, 9/11), and his warm, unforced singing is a major asset. Toby Spence looks



A stripped-down Billy Budd: the Teatro Real in Madrid presents a powerful production of Britten's masterpiece

too boyish for Captain Vere (when he says 'I have studied men and their ways', we do not quite believe him), but he sings the text with such clarity that we start to see the opera through his eyes. There is something very ordinary, in a good sense, about Brindley Sherratt's man-next-door Claggart until, left alone to expound on his motivation, he erupts in a powerful outpouring of repressed desire and self-loathing.

There are some good individual turns among the supporting cast, notably Clive Bayley's Dansker and Duncan Rock's Donald. The ungrateful roles of the officers' trio are decently taken by Thomas Oliemans, David Soar and Torben Jürgens. Ivor Bolton is the skilful conductor, keeping the drama taut, if without the pressure-cooker intensity achieved, with some help from the close studio balance, by Charles Mackerras on Decca's DVD of the still gripping 1966 black-and-white BBC television film (9/08). The Madrid chorus does itself proud, laying bare how brutal daily life on board ship is with no sign of respite on the horizon. The final scene of this *Billy Budd*, grandly staged, sturdily sung, is as powerful as it gets. **Richard Fairman**

Fagerlund

Höstsonaten (Autumn Sonata)

Anne-Sofie von Otter *mez* Charlotte Andergast

Erika Sunnegårdh *sop* Eva

Tommi Hakala *bar* Viktor

Helena Juntunen *sop* Helena

Nicholas Söderlund *bass* Leonardo

Finnish National Opera Chorus and Orchestra /

John Storgårds

BIS (F) ② BIS2357 (120' • DDD/DSD)

Recorded live, September 19, 23 & 30, 2017

Includes synopsis, libretto and translation



A year after its premiere at the Finnish National Opera and

appearance on OperaVision (11/17), here's a chance to experience the score for Sebastian Fagerlund's opera *Autumn Sonata* outside the theatrical context of Stéphane Braunschweig's austere and highly effective production.

The work is based not so much on Ingmar Bergman's film of the same name as on the screenplay Bergman wrote for it, adapted by Gunilla Hemming. Anne Sofie von Otter created the role of the lauded

pianist Charlotte, a grand artiste with little ability to empathise with the struggling, isolated daughters (one severely paralysed) she visits for the first time in seven years.

Bergman's story is one where strong emotions are bound up by Nordic reserve until they explode, and that is how this brooding and rather eventless encounter flourishes as an opera. The dramatic flashpoints don't alter the plot, they wrench it open – emotional abuse, acidic resentment and rampant selfishness grinding up against one another and a lead character so caught between two worlds that she has ceased to exist in either of them.

Fagerlund's brooding, tension-ridden score is excellent at differentiating between Charlotte (her music all uppity and precious) and Eva (lost in a sea of loneliness and emotional damage) and grinding those elements together to deliver the opera's sucker punches. Listening without looking, I sometimes wished Fagerlund had given the pace and rhythm at which words are delivered a touch more variation, but was even more impressed with his ability to build the tension in a scene and by the cold grandeur of the opera's entire sonic realm,

reflecting this story of human hubris and folly so well. Second time round, I also found its critique on classical music audiences and their devotion to star artists even more pertinent.

Speaking of which, we don't quite sense von Otter's magnificence in the lead role from the audio-only recording, although the slight tiring in her voice is in tune with the character and she has an impressive way of accessing coldness in it, too. She gives it her all and so does a stringent Erika Sunnegårdh as Eva, but Helena Juntunen's is the voice that pings out of the recording in its fluidity, brightness and support. As the paralysed mute Helena who turns to the audience to tell her story, she offers the opera's only real ray of hope and image of beauty. All the more effective as John Storgårds marshals the orchestra with the depth, darkness and foreboding it needs, making the most of Fagerlund's distinctive harmonic tension. **Andrew Mellor**

Handel

Arminio

Christopher Lowrey *countertenor* Arminio
Anna Devin *sop* Tusnelda
Sophie Junker *sop* Sigismondo
Helena Rasker *contr* Ramise
Paul Hopwood *ten* Varo
Owen Willetts *countertenor* Tullio
Cody Quattlebaum *bass-bar* Segeste
Göttingen Festival Orchestra / Laurence Cummings

Accent ③ ACC26409 (164' • DDD)
 Recorded live at the Deutsches Theater, Göttingen, Germany, May 12, 2018
 Includes libretto and translation



As captured live by NDR at the Göttingen Handel Festival last May,

stage noises and imperfections inevitably arise from this staged production of *Arminio* (1737). Nevertheless, all participants create characterisations that live and breathe with theatrical verve, unlike accounts by Alan Curtis's Il Complesso Barocco (Virgin/Erato, 9/01) and George Petrou's Armonia Atenea (Decca, 5/16) that were developed solely in the recording studio – although since then the Greeks participated in a fully fledged production at Karlsruhe (C Major, 7/18).

The plot concerns the Germanic tribes led by Hermann defeating the Romans led by Quintilius Varus at the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest in 9AD, although the

drama springs from complicated relationships between the title-hero, his wife Tusnelda, her brother Sigismondo (in love with Arminio's sister Ramise) and their treacherous father Segeste – who has formed an obsequious alliance with the Roman general Varo (who desires Tusnelda but aspires to virtuous conduct regarding his enemies).

The enchained Arminio's confrontation with Segeste spirals into the defiant tour de force 'Si, cadrò, ma sorgerà', performed by Christopher Lowrey with sneering disdain; when condemned to death, he entrusts his beloved Tusnelda to the care of his Roman enemy in 'Vado morir', accompanied sensitively by cellist Phoebe Carrai and theorbist David Tayler before the music flowers into full strings and oboes. Tusnelda's soliloquy response 'Rendimi il dolce sposo' is sung and acted to perfection by Anna Devin, whose mingling of marital fidelity and resigned hopelessness is supported by Handel's four-part string-writing at its most exquisite – more than any other moment in this recording, it proves the advantage of performing absolutely in character and in context.

The opera's most spectacular heroic outbursts belong to Sigismondo: 'Posso morir, ma vivere' has thrilling synergy between the orchestra's bustling bass lines and zesty violins doubled by oboes, and 'Quella fiamma' is a splendid concertante dialogue with oboist Susanne Regel – whose subtly shaded playing goes less over the top than Sophie Junker's extrovert embellishments and cadenza, though, to be fair, Handel himself provides the top C. Sigismondo's beloved Ramise is sung with dramatic punchiness by Helena Rasker. Paul Hopwood's Varo is an engaging antagonist; his final aria as he departs to battle ('Mira il ciel, vedrai d'Alcide') is the only appearance of horns in the opera. Cody Quattlebaum's resonant Segeste is thoroughly villainous, and Owen Willetts contributes precise coloratura and intelligent singing as the henchman Tullio.

Laurence Cummings's well-chosen tempos and the all-star baroque orchestra's expert playing yields a masterful performance. The only cut is the B section and repeat of Arminio's 'Ritorno alle ritorte' – although Handel seems not to have performed it either.

David Vickers

Massenet

Cendrillon

Kim-Lillian Strebel *sop* Cendrillon
Anja Jung *contr* Madame de la Haltière

Anat Czarny *mez* Prince Charming
Katharina Melnikova *sop* Fairy
Irina Jae Eun Park *sop* Noémie
Silvia Regazzo *mez* Dorothee
Juan Orozco *bar* Pandolfe
Jongsoo Yang *bass* King
Roberto Gionfriddo *ten* Dean of the Faculty
Naoshi Sekiguchi *bass* Master of Ceremonies
Pascal Hufschmid *bar* Prime Minister
Chorus of Theater Freiburg; Freiburg Philharmonic Orchestra / Fabrice Bollon

Stage directors **Barbara Mundel** and **Olga Motta**

Video director **Tiziano Mancini**

Naxos ② DVD 2 110563; ③ NBD0079V

(139' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS-HD MA5.1, DTS5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live, April 30 & May 4, 2017

Includes synopsis



On Massenet's *Cinderella* – late (1896) and dramaturgically unconventional – the librettist and composer

Henri Cain worked rather like Verdi on *Aida*. The first two acts are fairly predictable exposition (there's even a ballet for Prince Charming's would-be spouses, 'correctly' placed in Act 2), then a leap-in-the-dark Act 3 goes psychologically beyond the opera's Perrault fairy-tale source. Here Lucette (Cinders) plans to run away from her horrid step-family – and the seemingly unavailable Prince – with her kind father. But she really wants to die and ends up going it on her own, before being led by the Fairy Godmother to duet with the Prince's voice in an enchanted forest (both are present but neither can see each other). As the Prince is sung by a (darker-coloured) *soprano falcon* the result here is a lavish celebration of the female voice anticipating Strauss's *Rosenkavalier*.

And quite a tour de force for the title role (who sings for much of Act 3's nearly 40 minutes, including a big aria and a major duet), here taken by the Anglo-Swiss Kim-Lillian Strebel who is, luckily, the only truly outstanding voice here, with great security and cherishable tone throughout. Only moderate-level support is, otherwise, the order of the day, even from Orozco's father and the roudes of Melnikova's Fairy. Conductor Bollon keeps a firm hand on dynamics and pace but his orchestra lacks requisite colour and swagger for the deal of ceremonial music and mystery for the lovers.

The dramatic experiments of composer and librettist provide the joint stage directors (Motta is also the designer) with a vehicle for some *Regietheater* tropes, including setting the story within the

framework of a circus performance. (I've no idea why, but it doesn't interfere apart from in an overuse of the stage revolve.) What would have helped is tighter disciplining of the chorus and children's movements, especially their exits and half-in-view spying. But the duet of the two 'blind' lovers in Act 3 is seriously and movingly done, as is the eventual trying on the slipper in Act 4.

The current rival DVD (but not Blu-ray) comes from the Royal Opera House and stars Joyce DiDonato and Alice Coote and is cheaper. So competition might appear to be over – but the seriousness of this German production sets up more mystery about the work than Laurent Pelly's pretty London show. If only it had been rehearsed more precisely. The final recommendation is for the piece itself – do try it. **Mike Ashman**

Selected comparison:

de Billy (9/12) (VIRG/ERAT) DVD 602509-9

Musgrave

Mary, Queen of Scots

Ashley Putnam *sop* Mary, Queen of Scots
Jake Gardner *bar* Earl of Moray
Jon Garrison *ten* Lord Darnley
Barry Busse *bar* Earl of Bothwell
Kenneth Bell *bass-bar* David Riccio
Francesco Soriano *bass* Lord Gordon
Carlos Serrano *bar* Cardinal Beaton
Robert Randolph *bar* Earl of Morton
Pietro Pozzo *ten* Earl of Ruthven
Virginia Opera Chorus & Orchestra / Peter Mark
 Lyrta ® ② SRCD2369 (132' • ADD)

Recorded live in Norfolk, VA, April 2, 1978

From Vox ● MMG301 (4/80), Novello

NVLCD197 (3/90)

Includes synopsis and libretto



This new Lyrta reissue is the third incarnation of Virginia

Opera's live 1978 recording of Thea Musgrave's fast-moving, gripping three-act opera *Mary, Queen of Scots* (1976-77). Made only seven months after its Edinburgh Festival premiere (September 1977), the recording first appeared as a Vox three-LP set and resurfaced as a two-CD set from Novello Records. Both previous reviewers in these pages rightly expressed reservations about the cramped, airless sound quality, the roughness of the chorus and the audience noise, especially the ovations which punctuate key climactic moments. Comparing the Novello and Lyrta sets, there is little to choose between them in sound quality; and what still shines through is the vibrancy of the music itself, the orchestral accompaniment (brilliantly rendered by Musgrave's husband, Peter Mark) and the principals, Ashley Putnam in particular as the Queen, Jake Gardner as her half-brother, James Stewart – in many respects the agent provocateur of the work – and Barry Busse as Bothwell.

Both William Mann and Michael Oliver praised the stage work but had some doubts about its efficacy on disc, or at least this recording. I am not inclined to agree; familiarity with the synopsis or libretto allows one to follow the action, especially as Musgrave's music guides the listener through clearly enough. It has nearly everything: radiant melodies, especially the Queen's lullaby for her infant son (later James I of England), vibrant set pieces, as in the ballroom and council scenes, and a compelling plot – which concludes with Mary's imprisonment in England and separation from her son. The plot concentrates on Mary's relationships with her brother and lovers (Darnley and Bothwell), and it is this human drama that is the opera's strong suit. This production is not perfect (and is

40 years old), but it still delivers quite a powerful punch and I happily recommend it.

Guy Rickards

Puccini

La bohème

Nicole Car *sop* Mimi
Michael Fabiano *ten* Rodolfo
Simona Mihai *sop* Musetta
Mariusz Kwiecień *bar* Marcello
Florian Sempey *bar* Schaunard
Luca Tittoto *bass* Colline
Chorus and Orchestra of the Royal Opera House / Sir Antonio Pappano

Stage director **Richard Jones**

Video director **Rhodri Huw**

Opus Arte ® DVD OA1272D; ® Blu-ray OABD7248D

(111' + 11' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS-HD MA5.1,

DTS5.1 & LPCM stereo • 0 • s)

Extra features: Introduction; Antonio Pappano talks about the music; Cast gallery

Recorded live, September 25 & 29, October 3, 2017

Includes synopsis



The retirement of John Copley's 1974 production of *La bohème* was met with something approaching national mourning by many opera-goers, and rightly so. It was a true gem and Copley returned to lovingly direct each revival. The Royal Opera knew it was going to be a hard act to follow – rumours were that the order went out from on high not to destroy Julia Trevelyan Oman's marvellous sets at least until Richard Jones's new production had been unveiled last year.

Jones can be a frustrating director, his stagings stuffed with visual tics. At his worst – Britten's *Gloriana*, for example – he seems to send up the opera in question. At his considerable best, though – and I'd

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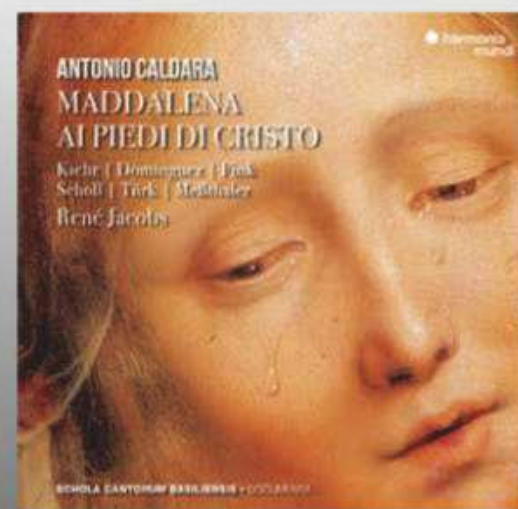
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Michael Fabiano and Nicole Car star in Richard Jones's production of Puccini's *La bohème* from the Royal Opera House

cite *Trittico* here, especially his take on *Suor Angelica* – he shows touches of true genius. But it's difficult to know exactly what Jones thinks of *Bohème*, though, because his staging is, with one exception, pretty bland.

Mercifully, there are none of Jones's familiar animal masks, paper bags on heads or flock wallpaper, but his familiar playful attitude to perspective pays dividends in a showpiece Act 2, Parisian arcades gliding across the stage before we settle into a chic Café Momus where Musetta's tabletop Waltz Song ends in her whipping off her knickers to the astonishment of the crowds pressing their noses to the windows. Stewart Laing's sets don't serve the drama so well elsewhere. The bohemians' garret looks spruce and Scandinavian among the flurries of snow, so brightly lit that candles (a crucial plot element) would be rendered redundant. However, these poor little rich boys – for that's who they seem to be – clearly haven't bothered with any furnishings yet. Most damagingly, during

the closing bars of the Act 3 quartet where both couples break up (Mimi and Rodolfo reluctantly, Musetta and Marcello volcanically), Jones has the little tavern shunt upstage to make way for the return of Act 4's Ikea garret. It kills the moment.

Antonio Pappano is always terrific in Puccini. His pacing and attention to orchestral detail are superb and he draws highly sympathetic playing from his orchestra. But the vocal performances here don't really make this a *Bohème* to stand out from the crowd. There's not much of the poet in Michael Fabiano's Rodolfo, oversinging early on, although he has a fabulous, Italianate sound. Mariusz Kwiecień is a stylish Marcello, easily snared by Simona Mihai's attractive Musetta. The other bohemian lads are amiable, no more. The Australian soprano Nicole Car is a lovely Mimi, though, very much the girl next door, with a simple charm to her Act 1 aria that immediately makes you love her. She

rides Puccini's long lyric phrases in Act 3 especially well and her death is touching. Rhodri Huw's stylish film direction certainly draws the viewer but it's going to need further acquaintance with this production, ideally with stronger singers, for Jones's *Bohème* to cast any magic. **Mark Pullinger**

Salieri

Les Horaces

Judith van Wanroij *sop*.....Camille
Cyrille Dubois *ten*.....Curiace
Julien Dran *ten*.....Young Horace
Jean-Sébastien Bou *bar*.....Old Horace
Philippe-Nicolas Martin *bar*.....
.....Oracle/Albain/Valère/Roman
Andrew Foster-Williams *bass-bar*.....High Priest
Eugénie Lefebvre *sop*.....Follower of Camille
Les Chantres du Centre de Musique Baroque
de Versailles; Les Talens Lyriques /
Christophe Rousset

Aparté ② AP185 (85' • DDD)

Includes synopsis, libretto and translation
Recorded live at the Château de Versailles,
October 15, 2016



In response to the first performance of Salieri's *Les Horaces* (Versailles, 1786), an eyewitness reported 'there cannot be a more humiliating fate for a tragedy of this kind, which, instead of moving the court to tears, drew laughter'. After three public performances in Paris the work disappeared into oblivion. Nicolas-François Guillard's libretto is modelled after Pierre Corneille's play (1640) about the ancient Roman warrior Horatius and his brothers (their father is also called Horatius); they are appointed to settle a bitter quarrel with the neighbouring city of Alba Longa in single combat. Inconveniently, the Albans choose Curiatius (who has just married Horatius's sister Camilla) and his brothers as their champions. In a nutshell, Horatius junior is the sole survivor and victor. In history (and Corneille) he also kills his sister Camilla as punishment for her grieving over the enemies of Rome; Guillard initially had her committing suicide but then decided merely to have her going off stage in a bad mood that might not necessarily be implacable.

This live concert recording by Les Talens Lyriques and Christophe Rousset reveals that Salieri's experimental set-pieces show the influence of his mentor Gluck. From the first imposing bars of the Overture to the tragic denouement just under 90 minutes later, the orchestral playing abounds with incisive theatrical momentum and an affinity for gracefully shaped harmonic details. Most characters and the chorus are integrated into dramatic events that propel forwards with rapid transitions. Arias are in short supply and brief – the most notable are sung marvellously by Judith van Wanroij's Camille. As Act 1 reaches its conclusion, superb woodwind-playing, vividly taut strings and the disciplined choir of the Centre de Musique Baroque de Versailles integrate deftly in an ensemble prematurely celebrating the apparent end of hostilities (and the union of Camille and Curiace); the ensuing ceremonial *intermède* for the Roman populace imploring the Deities for divine assistance is spearheaded with roaring aplomb by Andrew Foster-Williams's High Priest.

In the first scene of Act 2, the lovely trio 'Douce paix, transports pleins de charmes' lurches suddenly into Horace's valorous reaction to news that the gods

have chosen him to defend Rome's honour (the trumpet-festooned 'Dieux, protecteurs du Tibre'), followed hot on its heels by his friend Curiace's alarm at discovering that he must be the champion of the Albans – his conflicting emotions in 'Victime de l'amour, victime de l'honneur' are sung ardently by Cyrille Dubois and illuminated by plaintive woodwinds. The extraordinary succession of accompanied recitatives and duets between the star-crossed lovers (in Act 2 scene 5) alternates between passionate quarrelling and exquisite tenderness. In some respects, Salieri's music for the second *intermède* seems more remote from Mozart's Viennese comedies than the public scenes in Verdi's *Don Carlos*. The frenetic series of denunciations in Act 3 is an implausible scramble from a dramatic point of view, although the interruption of the Roman celebrations by the dismayed Camille's bitter rejection of her own gloating family (and the entire nation) has compelling emotional power.

David Vickers

Wagner

Der fliegende Holländer

George London *bass-bar* Holländer
 Leonie Rysanek *sop* Senta
 Josef Greindl *bass* Daland
 Fritz Uhl *ten* Erik
 Res Fischer *contr* Mary
 Georg Paskuda *ten* Steersman
 Chorus and Orchestra of the Bayreuth Festival /
 Wolfgang Sawallisch

Orfeo mono (M) ② C936 1821 (127' • ADD)

Broadcast performance, August 5, 1959



Clearly one of Wieland Wagner's great New Bayreuth nights. Orfeo is to be congratulated on putting it out despite the longtime catalogue success of a Philips release with some different principals from two years later. Inspired by Wieland's punky Brechtian new production of the opera, Sawallisch – rapidly becoming his chief's favourite 'Italian' (ie lighter and quicker) Wagner maestro – returned to as much detail of Wagner's original Dresden score as was then known about. And played it in three distinct acts even more to give the lie to Cosima's fabrication of the interval-less music drama she claimed Wagner had always wanted. So out went the 'redemption' *Tristan* ending to the Overture and Act 3, in come all the tremolandos that frightened Berlioz

and the blast of brass as Senta reacts to the Dutchman's arrival. But in best Wieland blue-pencil style there are no repeats in the (he thought) archaic Holländer/Daland Act 1 duet, the trios that close Act 2 and send the Holländer off to sea in Act 3, fearing all is lost, or the music that both closes Acts 1 and 2 and opens Acts 2 and 3.

Sawallisch puts this across with even more orchestral and choral punch than in 1961. It must have been a shock tantamount to original-instrument performance to audiences accustomed to the grander updatings of the heretical one-act version (as recorded by, say, Karajan or Thielemann). The cast is on fire as well. Is this now George London's greatest recording? With its mix of power, agony and scariness ('Den fliegenden Holländer nennt man mich') I think so. Leonie Rysanek, to be replaced in following years by Wieland's muse Anja Silja, is also in superbly risky form, similarly quite scary in the Ballad and clearly bored with the bourgeois world she wants to escape. And a stunning final top note. The rest are a team, with Greindl the very archetype of the comic obsessed local business man. The recording does full justice in clarity and balance to the (then) new world of original Wagner. It's indispensable to hear Anja Silja two years later leading the 1961 recording – and her work in the Klemperer London recording and concert – but I think this now takes top recommendation as a performance for all except mono-phobes. Mike Ashman

Wagner

Götterdämmerung

Gun-Brit Barkmin *sop* Brünnhilde
 Daniel Brennas *ten* Siegfried
 Eric Halfvarson *bass* Hagen
 Peter Kálmán *bass-bar* Alberich
 Shenyang *bass-bar* Gunther
 Amanda Majeski *sop* Gutrune
 Michelle DeYoung *mez* Waltraute
 Eri Nakamura *sop* Woglinde
 Aurhelia Varak *mez* Wellgunde
 Hermine Haselböck *mez* Flosshilde
 Sarah Castle, Stephanie Houtzeel *mezs*
 Jenufa Gleich *sop* Three Norns
 Bamberg Symphony Chorus; Latvian State Choir;
 Hong Kong Philharmonic Chorus and Orchestra /
 Jaap van Zweden

Naxos (B) ④ 8 660428/31 (4h 24' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre Concert Hall, January 18 & 21, 2018

Includes synopsis; libretto and translation available from naxos.com



At the end of the day – which we have now reached for this live Hong Kong concert *Ring* cycle assembled over four years – this project's main achievement may well prove to be the maturing of orchestra, conductor and recording team in performing Wagner's music. Each instalment has represented a measurable advance on the last – and the orchestral brass, in particular, may feel proud of their work here. There have been objections to Naxos's varying cast (though we have had a single Wotan, Mime and Erda) but this is not a stage cycle and these changes have helped keep the project in touch with today's upcoming voices.

Of this recording's 'newcomers', Gun-Brit Barkmin (her debut in the role) brings imagination and flair. It's quite a 'white' voice and not a huge one but she's a committed projector of the drama. This cannot (quite) compensate in the sections of the score that are, at least for now, just too weighty for her, especially, in Act 2, the oath on the spear and the later outburst of grief which provokes Hagen's offer of revenge. Daniel Brenna's voice, again not heavy but well focused, certainly records comfortably and he is always fully in touch with the dramatic requirements. Eric Halfvarson's Hagen, more experienced than this pair, is both vicious and frightening (as opposed to just plain 'black') of voice but occasionally sounds not in 100 per cent of health. Shenyang's impeccably voiced Gunther sounds like he has just emerged from language school, so carefully received is his pronunciation. Amanda Majeski's Guttrune is similarly noble without much dramatic impact; Michelle DeYoung is a reliable if rather neutral Waltraute, not helped by van Zweden's uncertain pacing of the scene. Norns and Rhinedaughters contribute well.

Van Zweden keeps everything moving at a good clip but seems to respond more emotionally to certain scenes than to others. After a rather uncertain Norns' scene the Dawn Duet and Rhine Journey go with terrific panache, an impact later rediscovered in the big ensemble scene of Act 2 after Brünnhilde is brought back from the rock. He is (unsurprisingly) not yet so sure of what all the music means, or relates to, and those little instrumental

decorations which Barenboim, for example, colours and places so precisely (hear the 2013 Proms performances, if you can) tend rather to go for nothing. Also, more surprisingly for a noted Brucknerian, energy tends to drain away from slow-moving passages, which makes some of the final Immolation hang fire.

There are now so many *Rings* available at discounted prices that, in both marketing and artistic terms, it's no longer possible simply to give this newcomer of very real merits a special bargain option box in some collectors' batting order of desirability. The best of this latest instalment and its predecessors has that unique excitement that comes from a major task attempted for the first time. There's little dull here, it always sounds good and it could make for an ideal economic first-time listen to the work. A selection of important rivals: Clemens Krauss (Pristine), Wilhelm Furtwängler (Pristine twice), Joseph Keilberth (Testament) and Daniel Barenboim (various).

Mike Ashman

Dmitri Hvorostovsky

Bellini *I Puritani* – Ah! per sempre io ti perdei

Rossini *Il barbiere di Siviglia* – All'idea di quel metallo **Tchaikovsky** Eugene Onegin – Vi mnye pisali ... Kogda bi zhizn domashnim krugom.

The Queen of Spades – Ya vas lyublyu

Verdi *Un ballo in maschera* – Alzati! ... Eri tu.

Don Carlo – Signora! Per Vostra Maestà ... Che mai si fa nel suol francese ... Carlo, ch'è sol il

nostro amore. *Rigoletto* – Pari siamo ... Figlia!

Mio padre! *Simon Boccanegra* – Plebe! Patrizi!

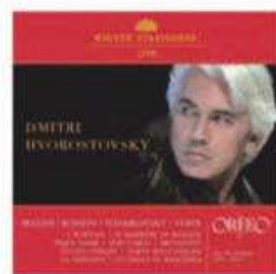
Popolo. La traviata – Pura siccome un angelo

Dmitri Hvorostovsky bar

Chorus and Orchestra of the Vienna State Opera

Orfeo © C966 181B (78' • DDD)

Recorded live 1994-2016



The late Dmitri Hvorostovsky sang 10 roles at the Wiener Staatsoper.

Nine of them are represented on this Orfeo disc – only his Iago is absent – captured live and released less than a year after the Siberian baritone's death. They're presented almost chronologically, ranging from Hvorostovsky's early, refulgent tone in *I puritani* (1994) to his performances in 2016, when he returned to the stage after his first round of treatment for the brain cancer that killed him the following year.

It's an interesting collection. The excerpts aren't always the obvious ones: there's no death of Posa (the great scena from *Don Carlo* which arguably won Hvorostovsky the Cardiff Singer of the World crown in 1989), but instead his little ballata with Eboli and Elisabetta; no 'Cortigiani!' from *Rigoletto*, but the Act 1 monologue followed by the long duet between the jester and his daughter, Gilda.

Some of the singing isn't terrific (his Figaro is a bit hectoring – Rossini wasn't natural territory), but Prince Yeletsky in *The Queen of Spades* (1999) was the perfect role for him: aristocratic, luscious, long legato lines, beautifully poised and noble. Hvorostovsky at his finest. His signature role, the haughty Onegin, is well represented, although he is placed far from the footlights in the introduction to the scene where he rejects Tatyana, a hazard of live recording.

His 2010 *Rigoletto* is heartfelt, although conductor Michael Güttler pushes the tempo insensitively faster than you sense either Hvorostovsky or Patrizia Ciofi is entirely comfortable with. There is an understandable deterioration in the voice by the time we get to 2016. His Germont sounds hollow and is up against Marina Rebeka's frosty Violetta, who is far too imperious in the long duet from *Traviata*. Nevertheless, there's a rugged majesty to his Boccanegra in the Council Chamber scene, supported by Barbara Frittoli's fruity Amelia and Ferruccio Furlanetto's dogged Fiesco, theatrically conducted by Marco Armiliato. The disc closes with an impassioned 'Eri tu' from *Un ballo in maschera*, Renato being his final Staatsoper role debut.

Oliver Láng's booklet note suffers from a few erroneous claims: Hvorostovsky didn't sing Yeletsky there 73 times, but sang 73 performances in total at the Haus am Ring, according to the Staatsoper's online archive; and his most-performed role was Germont *père* rather than Posa. However, there are interesting press quotes and reminiscences, charting Vienna's love affair with this remarkable baritone.

Mark Pullinger

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*"While I was theoretically looking for pythons,
in the evenings I would record different types of music..."*

David Attenborough reflects on his time filming *Zoo Quest* between 1954-1963

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Jazz

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Barre Phillips

End To End

ECM 2575



As with a virtuoso on any instrument Phillips can catch the ear with a single note or relatively simple phrase, but it is his poise, self-possession and desire to work with space and silence, rather than rush to fill it, that makes this work so compelling. There is such clarity in both the developmental path and the ambience of each piece, possibly a fringe benefit from Phillips' extensive work in film music. When a theme comes back into earshot, none more so than the wistful strummed chords reminiscent of a North African string instrument such as the oud, the impact is enormous. While Phillips' fingered lines have wonderfully precise articulation his

arco work is outstanding, again because of the balance he shows in an approach where he doesn't overplay but still fashions a textural range that moves coherently from dark and fibrous to light and luminous. Free of superficial pyrotechnics, this is a masterfully measured work that should appeal as much to lovers of song as to students of sound. **Kevin Le Gendre**

Wayne Shorter

Emanon

Blue Note



Emanon represents the culmination of a lifetime ambition and the first time a strings project of Wayne Shorter's has been released by a major recording company. His four orchestral compositions – 'Prometheus Unbound',

'Pegasus', 'Lotus' and 'The Three Marias' – fill the first CD and were recorded with the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, plus his quartet. The graphic novel that accompanies these pieces is a nice touch, but an after the fact rationalisation devised by Shorter and Monica Sly, since the music was originally written without programmatic intent and stands on its own as a fine series of contemporary compositions that do justice to his enormous talent. The second and third CDs comprise some compelling live quartet performances recorded, according to Shorter, at the Barbican at the end of 2016. It is here that the main interest centres – it is, after all, the finest ensemble in jazz today – and the heights they attain with their 'time-no changes' forays into the outer limits of improvisational imagination are nothing short of compelling.

Stuart Nicholson

World Music

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Manu Delago

Parasol Peak

One Little Indian (32 mins)



Since popularising the hang drum – a melodic percussion instrument, and cousin to the steel pan – at the turn of the millennium, Manu Delago has collaborated with Björk, the Cinematic Orchestra and Anoushka Shankar. *Parasol Peak* is in fact both a film and an album. Inspired by the Austrian Alps near Delago's home of Tyrol, the resultant compositions were written for an ensemble who then climbed Parasol Peak with Delago to perform them in situ. The film is remarkable, but most importantly the project stands up sonically on its own merit.

The agitations of 'Parasol Woods' are full of promise, yet as the ensemble

progresses the music becomes more expansive. Found sounds are incorporated and the trickling rivers that pervade the stunning 'Alpine Brook' seep into stark winds on 'Ridge View', acting as a sonic bed for Delago's pensive hang lines and the delicate woodwinds of Georg Gratzer. The jubilation captured in its title-track upon reaching the summit is an overwhelming release. This isn't simply sonic documentation of a hike. Rather, it's a profoundly musical journey. **Alex De Lacey**

Robert 'Robi' Svärd

Alquimia

Asphalt Tango (42 mins)



Swedish flamenco guitarist Robert 'Robi' Svärd released his engaging debut album *Pa'ki Pa'ka* in 2016. This

album won him not only good reviews but the attention of Spain's flamenco community, who were extremely impressed by his fluid, lyrical technique. Where *Pa'ki Pa'ka* was slightly hesitant – a magnificent display of guitar playing but perhaps lacking in that magical *duende* spirit, *Alquimia* is stunning as both the guitarist and his Spanish collaborators contribute to an exceptional album.

Throughout, the performances are models of clarity – *palmas* (hand claps) provide the rhythmic base for which Svärd channels his taut, melodic guitar lines, while a variety of vocalists sing with the requisite skill and passion. There's plenty of space left in the performance, and no one shows off or over-emotes. Instead the Swede and the Spaniards come together to create a furious, exciting and quite beautiful whole. **Garth Cartwright**

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GEORGE SZELL • 104

ROB COWAN'S REPLAY • 110

ALICIA DE LARROCHA • 107

CLASSICS RECONSIDERED • 112

BOX-SET ROUND-UP • 109

George Szell the perfectionist

Richard Osborne welcomes the Hungarian conductor's entire discography for CBS

I would be lying if I told you that I had an underprivileged childhood but the arrival of this (to me) entirely astonishing 106-CD retrospective has given me pause for thought. The fact is that at the time of their making in the 1950s and early 1960s many of these recordings were either unknown in Europe or never available long enough to be chosen as mainstream recommendations by the London-based critics I so avidly read.

And now this great box arrives with a library of Cleveland recordings, many of which knock acclaimed rivals of the time into the proverbial cocked hat. What's more, post-1952, the sound itself is often exceptional. Well-honed music-making in a musically sympathetic hall will generally produce good results, so what we have here isn't simply down to the self-evidently superb work of Sony Classical's analogue-to-digital transfer team.

Take Szell's 1952 recording of Dvořák's *New World* Symphony, one of the most persuasive of all accounts, yet one which is barely known, even now. It, too, is beautifully recorded.

The scales finally dropped from my eyes when I heard Szell and his orchestra in Edinburgh in 1967. This was the halcyon age of Karajan's Berliners and our own LSO. But even in that company the Clevelanders seemed special; not just technically but in the refinement and freedom of their music-making. It was some years later that I acquired their 1965 disc of Dvořák's *Slavonic Dances* and was able to marvel afresh at the impeccable intonation, the hair's-breadth rubatos, the flawless balances and those multilayered voicings that were the hallmarks of Szell's style. Rarely, if ever, had I heard an orchestra so perfectly balanced of and within itself. No wonder this was one of Carlos Kleiber's favourite records.

Born in Budapest in 1897 but raised in pre-1914 imperial Vienna, György Széll was a prodigy, principally, though not exclusively, as a pianist. His teachers included Richard Robert, who also taught Hans Gál, Clara Haskil and Szell's lifelong friend Rudolf Serkin, as well as Brahms's close confidant, the musicologist Eusebius Mandyczewski. The Brahms treasures in this Cleveland retrospective are too numerous to mention.

Szell was particularly proud of the fact that his orchestra brought to different national types their own distinctive voice

Even if your name is Serkin, Curzon or Casadesu, it must be both a comfort and a trial to know that, in Mozart especially, your conductor is perhaps as good a pianist as you. Szell ceased performing concertos in public in 1956 and was disparaging about his playing thereafter, claiming that conducting develops muscles no pianist can afford to have. Yet here he is (disc 105) in 1967 with Cleveland concertmaster Rafael Druian playing Mozart violin sonatas with a fleetness of touch, grace and lightly-worn wisdom that, were the disc to be up for a *Gramophone* Award in 2019, would cause the opposition to take to the hills.

It was around this time that Szell recorded his matchless set of Haydn's first six 'London' Symphonies, judged by the great Haydn scholar HC Robbins Landon to be among 'the finest performances of 18th-century music I have ever heard'.

Robbins Landon may have been *parti pris*, since it was a wartime New York performance of the rarely heard Symphony No 97 conducted by Szell

that was his road-to-Damascus moment with Haydn. He also sang under Szell as a student chorus-member at the Met in *Die Meistersinger*. Spellbound by Szell's 'economic, authoritative and magisterial style', he wondered why he was used so little in a world where 'nonentities abounded'. It's a question some of us are still asking.

One of the sacrifices Szell made in 1946, when he took charge of this youngest and least fashionable of America's 'big five' orchestras with the aim of making it 'second to none', was that he more or less gave up opera. Yet one of the joys of his Cleveland legacy is the degree to which his skills as opera conductor inform his orchestral performances, not least in the music of Mozart and Haydn.

Szell explained his orchestra's success as the result of 'long, painstaking work on the part of exceptionally conscientious musicians who have been playing together in a style of their own, and who are so secure in what they are doing there is no necessity to be afraid of taking chances'.

He himself had no great love of recording. 'Cut-and-dried, repeatable, put-together, faultless but always the same' is his withering put-down in one of the several diverting interviews included on the final CD of the set. To counter this, he favoured long takes, played 'as live'. This explains why you will occasionally be lifted from your seat, pleasingly or otherwise, as a sudden adrenalin-surge courses through the orchestra. To some extent this is the Magyar in Szell, as at the end of his gloriously realised 1958 recording of Dvořák's Eighth Symphony where he and his players let rip with an astonishing firecracker of a coda. 'Try this, if you dare' seems to be the message to the musical godfathers in Leningrad and Berlin.

'How can one comment on a performance which is flawless in every

respect?’ asked the composer – Walton, not Dvořák – after hearing Szell irradiate his music. The 1961 Cleveland recording of Walton’s recent Second Symphony was often cited by Szell as a good illustration of why we need the gramophone.

Szell was particularly proud of the fact that his orchestra brought to different national types their own distinctive voice. The many wonderful performances of Czech and Hungarian music can be taken as read, even if we’re unprepared for the sheer idiomatic chutzpah of, say, Szell’s witty and life-enhancing account of Kodály’s *Háry János* Suite. Their Tchaikovsky (the Fifth Symphony here) was always plausibly Russian-sounding, though it’s the way the Clevelanders replicate the Viennese sound that astonishes more. No European-based conductor would dare to try and play Strauss – Johann or Richard – as Szell’s old friends and sparring partners the Vienna Philharmonic habitually do. But Szell does, and he succeeds. If anything shows what this man could do with an orchestra, this is it!

One of Szell’s finest Strauss recordings – a 1957 collection available in Europe to ‘Special Order’ – included a laugh-aloud *Till Eulenspiegel* that has all the turbulence of a medieval brawl and a *Don Juan* whose mixture of élan and nobility outpoints anything Toscanini or Karajan have left on record. But, then, Szell recorded his first *Don Juan* – or part of it – in Berlin in 1929 when Strauss himself was late for the session and Szell’s warm-up takes of sides 1 and 2 were approved for use under Strauss’s name.

As Deryck Cooke once remarked, Szell was never as great a ‘characteriser’ of Strauss’s music as, say, Beecham or Clemens Krauss. His 1964 centenary resuscitation of *Sinfonia domestica* was very much the music played as music. (It’s why some people feared Szell, the exacting maths master whose class you pray you’ll never be in.) There were no such reservations about Szell’s recording of Mahler’s Fourth Symphony, described by Cooke as ‘one of the very greatest Mahler performances on record’.

The most important supporting player in this anthology is the distinguished French pianist Robert Casadesus. Received opinion has it that in the post-war era this master of the unobtrusive *jeu perlé* style became brash and overweening. Well, there is here a thrilling 1952 account of Liszt’s Second Piano Concerto, but the Mozart concertos – 12 of them in all – are the thing. Some will think them too persistently understated, yet they have a quality of quiet beauty that Szell’s flawlessly



During his tenure in Cleveland, 1946-70, George Szell created perhaps the greatest orchestra of the day

stylish expositions and commentaries richly complement.

There is also Leon Fleisher, the young Schnabel pupil whose career was halted in 1964 by a repetitive-strain condition. He has important recordings here, not least memorable 1959 accounts of Mozart’s concerto K503 and Beethoven’s G major (No 4). A small annexe of Szell’s CBS recordings with the New York Philharmonic includes a 1953 Silver Jubilee Concert in Carnegie Hall in which Vladimir Horowitz fires off an account of the Tchaikovsky B flat minor that the makers of *Tom and Jerry* might have enjoyed. Szell’s conducting is impeccable, though even he can’t stop the roof falling in during the final reel.

A handsome 146-page hardback chronicles the ‘original sleeves’ aspect of the collection. Szell hated many of the early sleeves (‘atrocious, vulgar, ignorant’, ‘wrapping a supermarket would be ashamed of’) but they are of documentary interest, not least in detailing original couplings which EMI thoughtlessly revised. I think of their dismembering of an exquisite 1960-61 disc which originally coupled Haydn’s *Oxford* Symphony with Schubert’s *Unfinished*.

As a later Cleveland music director, Christoph von Dohnányi, once remarked,

‘Szell has been dead for 20 years but when the Cleveland Orchestra gives an outstanding concert abroad, he still gets a rave review.’ And so he should. His legacy is as gratifying musically as it is important historically; and it may become more so when folk finally tire of the kind of high-speed thuggery, devoid of any hint of a sung phrase or a legato line, that currently dominates much contemporary conducting of the Viennese classics. Szell didn’t linger in the *Unfinished* but, my goodness, this super-intelligent scion of old Austro-Hungary knew more about the real Schubert than any of these minor misconductors can begin to dream of. **G**

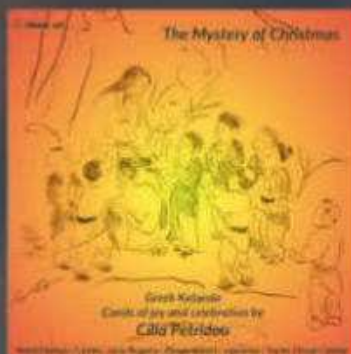


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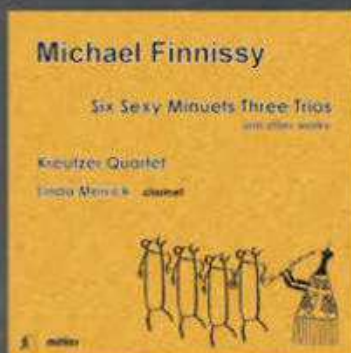
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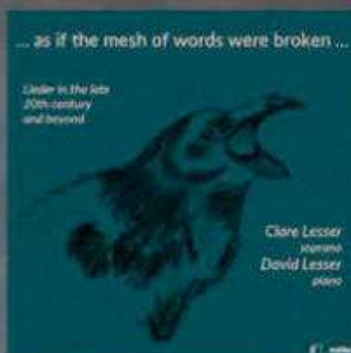
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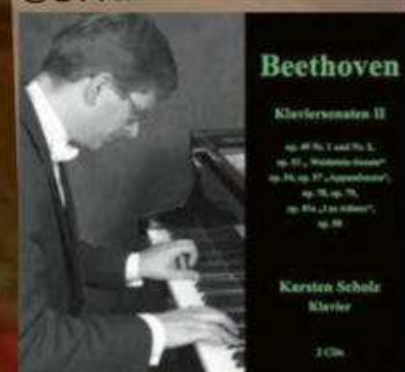
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The Spanish dynamo

Bryce Morrison immerses himself in the complete Decca legacy of Alicia de Larrocha

Small in stature, large in presence, Alicia de Larrocha's reputation as one of the greatest pianists of the last century is reaffirmed in Decca's magisterial 41-disc tribute, complementing EMI/Warner's invaluable eight-disc box (1/11). Tirelessly celebrated in the Spanish repertoire, notably in the twin peaks of Albéniz's *Iberia* and Granados's *Goyescas*, her range was nonetheless all-embracing, as at home in Albéniz's hymn to luxuriance as in Mozart's hymns to economy. Fearless in the former's reckless abandon of all propriety, Larrocha recorded *Iberia* three times, constantly seeking for the truth or essence of that torrid tapestry of, chiefly, Andalusia. And if her final version has less edge or sheer physicality than her first, her marginally slower tempos allow for a greater sense of intricacy and refinement. In the opening 'Evocación' her rubato tugs against the sultry melodic line as if she were loath to leave every treasured note. Hear her in the central section of 'Fête-Dieu à Séville', where she makes the melody rise and fall against its swaying accompaniment in a manner sufficiently insinuating to make you catch your breath.

Then, turning to Granados's *Escenas románticas*, a very Spanish bow to Chopin (it includes a Berceuse, a Mazurka and a final Spianato), I can only lay my cards on the table and say that if I were to name some of the greatest piano-playing on record I would unhesitatingly point to this performance, which alternates the utmost imaginative delicacy with searing passion, always with a sense of that undertow of darkness and melancholy inseparable from the Spanish temperament; 'abrupt as when there's slid/its rich gold blazing pall/from some black coffin lid'. What aplomb, too, in Turina (beloved in Spain if less admired elsewhere). At the other end of the spectrum, what moving simplicity she finds in Mompou, whose music Larrocha, joining me in a BBC broadcast some years ago, described as 'gentle, like the man'. Clearly Larrocha and Spain are inseparable considerations and it is small wonder that Claudio Arrau, who championed Spanish music early in his career, gave up in wonder and despair after hearing Larrocha.

Asked about her early studies, Larrocha confessed that Bach and Mozart were the foundation of her playing. In Mozart's B flat Concerto, K595, you hear how her relative sobriety in this most poignant and



Alicia de Larrocha: a musical outlook built on the foundations of Bach and Mozart

elusive of works reaches the very heart of the matter. You may miss something of Clifford Curzon's wit and elegance or the strange autumnal haze Wilhelm Kempff cast across the finale but, again, you feel that Larrocha belongs to that élite who, seeming to do little, end by doing everything. Her Bach *Italian Concerto* is wondrously robust and in 'hyphenated Bach' she achieves one of her grandest glories. Even when set against pianists of the stature of Michelangeli, Bolet and Rubinstein in the Bach-Busoni Chaconne, Larrocha's towering strength, her thundering of this opulent reworking of Bach to the heavens, makes comparison an irrelevance.

And what of Larrocha's Schubert? Her way with the A major Sonata, D664, made me recall a description of music 'full of the lights and smiling colours of a spring day', such is her avoidance of all special pleading or underlining, her transparency allowing Schubert his own voice.

Larrocha's opening salvo launching her Decca career came with the surprising choice of solo works by Grieg and Mendelssohn, at once alerting the public to her unique, instantly recognisable voice. And here, in particular, you are made aware of a pedal technique that was the foundation of her kaleidoscopic range of colour.

Her way with Rachmaninov's Third Piano Concerto surprises with a restraint that's the reverse of, say, Argerich's molten

bravura. You may miss the thrills and spills of greater extroversion but Larrocha is adept at capturing a deep-dyed melancholy beneath the virtuoso surface. This is no bludgeoning into submission but an orderly statement of beauty.

And there is more, so much more. Such largesse demands a book rather than an article. Yet the very discs themselves would cry out if I were not to mention, in passing, three of Larrocha's greatest triumphs on EMI: in Albéniz's *Azulejos*, with its endlessly evolving multicoloured and textured dream world; in *La Vega*, where you hear a *cantabile* so bold it sounds as if squeezed from the keyboard; and in Falla's Danza No 2 from *La vida breve*, where you virtually see the strutting toreador in all his macho finery.

Modest to a fault, Larrocha shied away from Jorge Bolet's bemused reaction to her playing ('do you never play a wrong note, Alicia?') and was left lost in admiration for others, notably for Horowitz, kneeling before him and kissing the hand of an artist radically different to herself. Decca's set is superbly presented and includes tributes from Larrocha's daughter and from André Previn (his 'favourite pianist'). Invest in this reissue and you will own recordings beyond price. **G**

THE RECORDING

Alicia de Larrocha - The Complete Decca Recordings

Decca © (41 discs) 483 4120



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BOX-SET *Round-up*

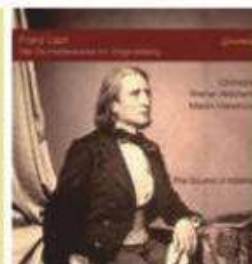
Rob Cowan offers a personal round-up of some worthwhile CD bargains

Back in September I welcomed Capriccio's 15-CD set 'Sir Neville Marriner: The Stuttgart

Recordings'. I said then that Marriner's **Academy of St Martin in the Fields** legacy for Capriccio was waiting in the wings and here it is now. Even Marriner devotees may be surprised at the conductor's comprehensive grasp of the complete Tchaikovsky symphony cycle, *Manfred* and the Third Symphony being among the finest recorded versions I've ever heard, both readings combining warmth with balletic instrumental pointing and dramatic climaxes. What most impresses me is the honesty of Marriner's conducting, no messing or dawdling, just telling it as it is and Tchaikovsky reaps the benefits. Dvořák's *New World* Symphony is equally good and also included alongside Dvořák Nos 7 and 8 are the eight symphonies of William Boyce, a disc of highlights from Adam's *Giselle*, a delightful all-Massenet programme, Elgar's *Enigma* Variations and *Wand of Youth* Suites, vividly played Mendelssohn overtures and, returning to more familiar Marriner territory, a disc of Purcell incidental music.

Speaking of **Mendelssohn** reminds me that LSO Live has now packaged John Eliot Gardiner's excellent symphony cycle into a four-SACD box-set, together with a Pure Audio Blu-ray disc. Having reviewed two of the original releases in these pages, I can reaffirm the sense of occasion generated in Gardiner's account of the *Reformation* Symphony and the 'clean, driven and transparent' approach to various overtures. The coda of the *Scottish* provides a credible testing point for anyone wanting confirmation of Gardiner's immaculate sense of musical judgement. True, Thomas Fey's equally well-scrubbed Heidelberg set (Hänssler) has appeared since, but Gardiner and the LSO are easily as revealing.

A more esoteric manner of revelation comes courtesy of Gramola and the welcome boxed reissue of Martin Haselböck's set of **Liszt's** orchestral works 'The Sound of Weimar', now more comprehensive than any rival, given two discs of Schubert and Liszt transcriptions, as well as the complete tone poems,



both symphonies and the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*. Surveying a selection of these recordings in these pages some while ago I observed that they were important but, being on softer-grained period instruments, their impact isn't always immediate. If at first you miss the visceral drama and tonal volume offered by modern instruments en masse, do persevere. Time and again Haselböck's approach reveals aspects of Liszt's scoring that would otherwise go unnoticed; and even if, after learning these performances by heart, you return to Masur, Haitink, Solti or the maverick Nikolai Golovanov, Haselböck will have taught you how to 'listen through' as well as merely 'listening to'. I'd stand by that assessment, adding that *From the Cradle to the Grave* sounds more prophetic of musical things to come than ever before and the *Faust* Symphony is given an intensely dramatic performance, its textures freshly cleansed, while Haselböck's pacing is well-nigh ideal. But if you fancy investing you'll need to act fast: this is a limited edition.

Like de Waart's Rotterdam Rachmaninov, Karl Böhm's Mozart symphonies with the Berlin Philharmonic give it to us straight

Like Marriner, Gardiner and Haselböck, Edo de Waart is an honest musician on a mission, even (in his case) when that mission gives him initial doubts. Initial reservations about **Rachmaninov's** *Symphonic Dances* faded in the light of repeated live performances and by the time de Waart came to record the work with the London Philharmonic he was perfectly au fait with its spirit, especially in the last dance (where, at the close, he lets the tam-tam reverberate à la Kirill Kondrashin). Eloquence's reissue of de Waart's tear-free set of the complete symphonies, as well as *The Isle of the Dead*, *The Rock* and *Caprice bohémien*

offers us bright, crisply played performances with forwards-moving tempos and transparent textures. If

you're expecting a wallow, forget it: these performances present Rachmaninov the symphonist as just that, a Romantic composer with a keen sense of musical structure and an urgent message to convey, and the couplings of Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* (a hand-picked sequence) and the Mussorgsky-Ravel *Pictures at an Exhibition* are just as good. Only the Dances and the *Caprice* are with the LPO, while all other items feature the Rotterdam Philharmonic.

Like de Waart's Rotterdam Rachmaninov, Karl Böhm's **Mozart** symphonies with the Berlin Philharmonic give it to us straight, though some of the earlier works might have benefited from a more robust approach. Later Menuettos tend toward stateliness (delightfully so in the case of the *Jupiter* Symphony) and the actual playing has an engaging refinement about it. Repeats are in rather short supply; and if the big G minor Symphony's first movement is hardly *molto allegro* there's a compensating shift in mood as the exposition gives way to the development section. These performances abound in meaningful subtleties. I enjoyed them but wouldn't want them in my collection without having contrasting alternatives to hand. DG's latest 10-CD repackaging usefully includes a single-disc Blu-ray Pure Audio sonic upgrade of the whole cycle, which is a subtle improvement on the harder-edged CDs. In general the sound quality (1959-68) is fairly good, some symphonies emerging as more richly recorded than others. **G**

THE RECORDINGS

Sir Neville Marriner:

The London Recordings

Capriccio © 14 C7250

Mendelssohn Symphonies Gardiner

LSO live © 5 (4) + LSO0826

Franz Liszt: The Sound of Weimar

Gramola © 9 99150

Rachmaninov Symphonies, etc de Waart

Decca Eloquence © 4 482 8981

Mozart Symphonies Böhm

DG © 11 (10 +) 483 5171GM11

REPLAY

Rob Cowan's monthly survey of historic reissues and archive recordings



Pioneering violinists

As I recall, the first time I heard Bach's solo violin works played with a 'Vega' Bach bow was on Emil Telmányi's 1953-54 Decca recordings of the complete cycle of Sonatas and Partitas (now on Testament). Violinist **Tossy Spivakovsky** acquired his Bach bow from Danish bow maker Knud Vestergaard (who had co-invented it with Telmányi in 1949); it enabled him to execute all of the four-string chords with greater ease and sonority. In a short spoken introduction included in the present set he articulates his reasoning well, but one only has to turn to such seasoned Bach interpreters as Heifetz, Milstein, Grumiaux and Szeryng, or more recently, Hilary Hahn, Julia Fischer and Alina Ibragimova to realise that arpeggiated chords can indeed have genuine expressive force.

Compare Spivakovsky's volatile account with the more poised version by Wolf

Bizarrely, the full-chord effect of the Bach bow more approximates the sound of a harmonium. Furthermore, Spivakovsky's performance of the D minor Chaconne opens with a welter of vibrato that rather counters the 'authentic' intentions of the innovative bow. It's a good performance, very good, in fact – but musical and sincerely expressed though it is, it's not the set's highlight, not by a long chalk. That has to be the first American radio performance of Bartók's Second Violin Concerto with Artur Rodziński conducting the New York Philharmonic (the orchestra featured on most of these broadcasts). The year was 1943, Bartók himself was in the audience and the performance has a sweetness and rustic edge to it that outshines even Menuhin in his prime.

Spivakovsky was especially noted for his performances of 20th-century music. Though not always the most immaculate of players, he was a real communicator with a formidable technique and a tone that was often seductive. It was good to

hear Frank Martin's gently provocative Violin Concerto, with Spivakovsky's performance rich in spontaneous feeling. However, it does have a significant vintage rival (also in mono) from **Wolfgang Schneiderhan** with the Suisse Romande Orchestra under Ernest Ansermet, a rather more inwards-looking performance, Ansermet's conducting more thoughtful and attentive to detail than Robert La Marchina's on the Spivakovsky recording. The Schneiderhan-Ansermet option appears as part of a Decca Eloquence all-Martin double-disc set that also includes persuasive performances of the *Concerto for Seven Wind Instruments*, the Etudes for strings, the *Petite symphonie concertante* and *In terra pax*.

Other 20th-century works programmed in the Spivakovsky set include Schuman's Violin Concerto under Lukas Foss (a fair match for Paul Zukofsky's DG recording under Michael Tilson Thomas) and Prokofiev's Concerto No 2 under Thomas Schippers, which momentarily comes adrift roughly halfway through the finale. As to standard repertoire, there's a Beethoven Violin Concerto imposingly conducted by Amerigo Marino, cleanly articulated versions of the Mendelssohn and Tchaikovsky concertos and a compelling Brahms Concerto under Josef Krips.

It's interesting to compare Spivakovsky's volatile account of Joachim's first-movement cadenza in the Brahms with the more poised version that **Endre Wolf** recorded in 1954 for the US label Music-Appreciation Records and which was issued on mono LPs only. First Hand Records (on a first 'Early Stereo Recordings' CD) has located binaural/stereo tapes for the second and third movements, whereas the first movement remains in mono. (This is not to be confused with Wolf's wholly stereo 1958 version of the Brahms for World Record Club with the Sinfonia of London under Anthony Collins.) Here the conductor of the LSO is Walter Goehr, whose solid accompaniment suits the warmed sobriety of Wolf's approach, though the finale is fairly spirited. The

sound, though, is pretty amazing for the date, certainly in the stereo movements. And that's not all we're given. The programme opens with another stereo recording of the LSO from 1954, this time under Norman Del Mar with music by Richard Strauss. *Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche* gets a lively enough performance, though it has a definite 'first take' feel to it, with sundry minor imperfections that race past as Till embarks on his destructive escapades. For much of the time the stereo sound quite belies its years.

And there's Saint-Saëns's First Cello Concerto with a full-toned **Paul Tortelier** supported by the Philharmonia Orchestra under Herbert Menges. This is more thickset in sound than the other two items, the stereo imaging less three-dimensional – stereo seems to be straining to return to the mono fold. But the performance is marvellous. Tully Potter and Peter Bromley provide excellent notes including a brief list of other EMI 1954 binaural/stereo recordings yet to be issued, not least Robert Irving conducting Dohnányi and Tchaikovsky, Chopin Ballades with Cortot, Ravel and Debussy under Markevitch, Puccini arias with Callas, *Fidelio* arias with Schwarzkopf (under Karajan), Del Mar in Beethoven's Fifth; and, in pure stereo, *Mandalay scena* with Peter Dawson, Kogan in Bach and Mozart, Tchaikovsky and Bloch with Navarra. Salivating? I certainly am.

THE RECORDINGS



Tossy Spivakovsky:
Live Performances with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra 1943-1962'

Doremi ⓑ ④ DHR8025/8



Frank Martin: Orchestral Works
Schneiderhan vn Suisse Romande Orch / Ansermet et al
Decca Eloquence Ⓢ ②
ELQ482 4997



Early Stereo Recordings:
Strauss. Saint-Saëns. Brahms
Wolf vc Tortelier vc LSO /
Del Mar, Goehr et al
First Hand Ⓢ FHR058



Tossy Spivakovsky: a real communicator with a formidable technique and often seductive tone

Gifts from Bournemouth

One of the first records I ever owned and still recall with great fondness was a 12-inch Columbia shellac coupling of Handel's *Largo* (from *Xerxes*) and Meyerbeer's Coronation March (from *Le prophète*), with **Sir Dan Godfrey** conducting the Bournemouth Municipal Orchestra. It's just resurfaced, extremely well transferred, on Pristine Audio's admirably varied salute to Godfrey – the Handel noble and sweet-centred, the Meyerbeer stately but with timps that sound, as recorded, distinctly out of tune. Mozart's *Jupiter* Symphony (performed by a generic 'Symphony Orchestra') enjoys a robustly played if occasionally offhand first movement, the development section more urgent than the exposition. The *Andante cantabile* is frankly workaday, the Menuetto uncommonly swift and the finale amiable but rather lacklustre. So that one's a curate's egg, which certainly can't be said of Godfrey's dashing performances

of German's Three Dances from *Henry VIII* and overtures by Suppé, Auber and Offenbach (*Orpheus in the Underworld* is both spritely and extremely well played). All of these are with the Bournemouth orchestra, as is the closing novelty, *The Two Imps* by Kenneth Alford with xylophonists W Byrne and WW Bennett – as happy a way to round off the programme as anyone could wish for. The original recordings date from the late 1920s to the mid-1930s.

THE RECORDING



**'Sir Dan Godfrey:
A Sesquicentennial Salute'**
Pristine Audio © PASC534

Rubbra revealed

As a symphonist, Edmund Rubbra was often on a level with Bax, even at times Vaughan Williams; but like that of so many British symphonists, his work has only rarely been granted its full musical value on disc. And by 'full value' I mean the sort of searing intensity that Sir Adrian Boult and the BBC SO generate for the Second Symphony on this exceptional 1954 relay. Rubbra was all about evolving drama, starting with a germ of an idea that stretched under the heat of mounting tension, certainly in the case of the first movement of both the Second and the Fourth Symphony. No 2 opens with a strong unison idea for strings that suggests parallels with the finale of Mahler's Ninth, until cumulus clouds part and pizzicato basses arrive alongside consoling woodwind. Thereafter, the language becomes highly distinctive, going for the burn at around the 5'00" mark. Here Boult really shows his mettle, inspiring among his players the sort of targeted virtuosity that Toscanini was regularly achieving with the same orchestra just a few years earlier. The *Adagio tranquillo* third movement is deeply moving, but be warned – if you want to access a particular movement, the CD and booklet information are at odds: the Scherzo second movement finishes at 5'07", and what should be the next track (3) starts at 5'13". The disc tells you that track 2 plays for 5'13" and 3 for 12'28", whereas both movements are on the one track that lasts 17'40" (none of this affects download versions, however, which have the tracks clearly separated). Nevertheless, it's a superb transfer. The disc includes Rubbra's concise and articulate spoken introduction to his Fourth Symphony. The piece opens to a triadic idea that's pure bliss, and near the start of his 'tutorial' Rubbra plays it on

the piano, warning that the instrument is incapable of capturing the violin crescendos that are part and parcel of the music. The 1942 world premiere performance, with the BBC SO conducted by the composer, is compelling, the strings occasionally sporting then-fashionable portamentos. I wouldn't say that Del Mar's Philharmonia recording for Lyrita is outclassed (there the playing is marginally superior, the sound rather more so), but as a historic document this is an invaluable addition to the Rubbra discography. As is the whole of this well-annotated CD (Robert Matthew-Walker's notes are an aid to one's appreciation) whose transfers have been lovingly achieved.

THE RECORDING



Rubbra: Symphonies Nos 2 & 4
BBC Symphony Orchestra /
Boult, Rubbra
Somm Recordings ©
SOMM0179

Stokowski in London

If Rubbra received compelling advocacy from Boult, Sir Malcolm Arnold was no less well served by the same orchestra under Leopold Stokowski in 1954 in a performance of *Beckus the Dandipratt* which brings out things in the music that I never realised were there – and maybe neither did Arnold (who loved the performance). Weighty, witty and splashed with primary colours, it's a real tour de force. From the same studio concert, Enescu's *Romanian Rhapsody* No 1 kicks up a storm with more in the way of reckless bravura than greets Stoky's American studio recordings, and Glière's *Coloratura Soprano* Concerto is beautifully traced even though once or twice Ilse Hollweg hits her vocal ceiling with less than comfortable results. Has anyone ever thought of adapting this lovely music for, say, a soprano saxophone? I think that would work rather well. As for the disc under review, the big news (for those who have yet to hear it) is yet another Stokowski Tchaikovsky Fifth, this one involving the International Festival Youth Orchestra with the nonagenarian maestro functioning at white heat. You'd never guess his age, nor theirs, for the performance is so shapely and relentlessly intense, while the 1973 stereo sound (in the Royal Albert Hall, London) is perfectly passable. Wonderful!

THE RECORDING



**Arnold. Enescu.
Glière. Tchaikovsky**
Hollweg sop BBC SO /
Stokowski et al
Cameo Classics © CC9107

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Richard Whitehouse and
Peter Quantrill revisit
Herbert von Karajan's
1973 DG recording
of Schoenberg's
Verklärte Nacht



Schoenberg

Verklärte Nacht

Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra /

Herbert von Karajan (DG)

This recording of *Verklärte Nacht* is as sumptuous as one would expect; I have heard grander, more architectural accounts of the score (Karajan seems to me to lose impetus once or twice) but never one with more attention to sonorous beauty ... Altogether a most impressive set, then, that establishes Karajan's sympathy with at least some important

aspects of the music of Schoenberg and his followers.

Jeremy Noble (3/75)

This is the first individual record from Karajan's four-disc set devoted to Schoenberg, Berg and Webern to be issued separately, but of the four it seems the least urgently necessary. There are excellent versions already available [although] Karajan and the Berlin Philharmonic offer strong competition, of course, and as far as refinement of phrasing and luminosity

of tone go they are probably ahead of the field. But in this music those qualities don't go quite the whole way. There is a toughness and an urgency in the scores which seems to me a little softened, a little slackened, by Karajan's concentration on beauty of tone and phrasing – incidentally disproving Keats's pronouncement that beauty is truth. Still, I wouldn't want to give the impression that these performances are anything less than distinguished in their own way; they are, and beautifully recorded too.

Jeremy Noble (5/76)

Richard Whitehouse My first remark is that, almost 45 years after it was made, Karajan's recording of *Verklärte Nacht* became a classic as if by default. Re-reading Jeremy Noble's original review was a reminder that most of the other performances in his Second Viennese School set attracted more attention; understandable since Schoenberg's Orchestral Variations, Berg's Three Pieces and Webern's Symphony were considered too left-field for commercial (as opposed to radio) orchestras. *Verklärte Nacht* had at least made that transition into the mainstream.

Peter Quantrill Looking back now, this recording really did take people by surprise, didn't it? For all that the piece had been welcomed into the fold of Austro-German repertoire – even, or especially, by those for whom most of Schoenberg's subsequent output was anathema – *Verklärte Nacht* was curiously slow to be embraced by the stable of grand maestros. Yes, there was Ormandy, there was Mitropoulos (Karajan's mentor as much as anyone else was) and one or two others. But Mitropoulos never shared Karajan's career savvy, or his determination to make records.

RW True, and Mitropoulos also had an equivocal take on the Austro-German repertoire that most likely explains an interpretative approach often poised on the brink of disaster – electrifying and unnerving in equal measure. Also, while *Verklärte Nacht* is 'accessible' in Schoenbergian terms, it remains a tough test of ensemble. There are several fine studio recordings of the work in the wake of Ormandy's Minneapolis account (1930), notably Horenstein (1956) and Stokowski (1960), but these tend to be affected by technical issues in a way Karajan would never have allowed.

PQ Quite why the piece was overlooked by most of the émigré maestros who had settled in the US, or perhaps more pertinently by their record companies, is another question. If the risk was to be taken in recording even early and luscious Schoenberg, so the argument seemed to run, better to do it with a string sextet. So it took Karajan to make this recording, and indeed to make the whole four-disc set of the Second Viennese School which was its initial context.

RW Which was precisely how it was marketed in 1975 and how investors must have experienced it (including me). Whether or not Karajan actually underwrote part of the costs in its making, and later boasted that the combined sales of LPs and cassettes were equal in height to the Eiffel Tower, it was clearly a project which mattered to him: a QED to those who still thought of this music as being a no-go area aesthetically.

PQ Yes, the pride Karajan felt in his achievement shines from the extraordinary advertisement-cum-manifesto for the set that Deutsche Grammophon placed in *Gramophone* at the time of its release. In 1973, especially in the English-speaking world, there were still a lot of people who had yet to accommodate themselves to the idea that this music could – indeed should – be played beautifully. And, whatever else it achieved, this recording proved them wrong.

RW Yes, that advertisement is a real period piece – comparable, I guess, to the claims made for Pink Floyd's *The Dark Side of the Moon* as heard in

30 seconds longer than 1973, which says a great deal for Karajan's consistency). Richard Osborne put his finger on it in his note to the Testament release of that 1988 account, when he said the studio reading 'preserves in large measure the music's chamber-music character': as good a reason as any, for me, why this recording has stood the test of time.

PQ But we're in a forest! At night! Surely a measure of claustrophobic intensity is intrinsic to a piece, in whichever guise, which represents Schoenberg's contribution to the *Wald* culture that casts so long and so dark a shadow over German music. At any rate I hear in the 1988 concert an apotheosis of Karajan's approach, and indeed of *Verklärte Nacht* in its super-sized format, even though by then the conductor was too infirm to do more than steer his orchestra into giving back all that they had learnt from him – and then some. If anything, it's the quadraphonic finessing of balance and those unstable shifts of perspective in 1973 that likely compromise the direction of musical travel towards transfiguration during the fourth stanza (track 4, from 3'30"). But then, in a forest, getting lost is all part of the experience ...

RW I think those hearing *Verklärte Nacht* without any knowledge of its background would surely take away the sense of an emotional crisis being confronted and overcome; and to a degree which sets the tone for Schoenberg's musical maturity. The problem with most later recordings is that they're either by chamber orchestras, which surely defeats the purpose of this transcription, or they view a literal playing of the notes as a fait accompli. While *Verklärte Nacht* isn't solely about rubato, it is integral to a meaningful interpretation such as many conductors seem unwilling to admit – another reason as to why Karajan's studio reading has stood the test of time.

PQ Maybe not so much unwilling as unable! At any rate, no one else stretches the pulse so tenderly into the coda while (unlike, say, Sinopoli or Levine) keeping up momentum – the Berliners' portamento makes no less key a contribution than Karajan's rubato at this point in terms of connecting note to note. And much as I'd love to import from 1988 that great groundswell of bass beneath the final chord, there is a sweep to this coda – compassion and delicacy too, not perhaps so associated now with Karajan – that puts its rivals in the shade. ⑥



Karajan coaxes an 'immediate' response from the BPO; (inset) DG's 'advert-cum-manifesto' in Gramophone (2/75)

quadraphonic. In either case, this comes down to a quality of sound that is beautiful not merely for itself but in conveying the music's essence; an experience that is nothing to do with softening its impact but intensifying it so that its emotional acuity is paramount. Karajan at his best had few peers in this regard.

PQ Karajan knew exactly whom he was addressing when he rebuked the purveyors of 'this nonsense, which one is always hearing, that I want to "smooth off the rough edges".' And when he praised his Berlin musicians for their ability 'to play it as if it were Mozart' – well, that's surely a desirable outcome in *Verklärte Nacht* no less than in Webern, isn't it?

RW I couldn't agree more in this respect. What, for you, are the highpoints of this recording – the sections, even moments, when it comes unmistakably into focus? Are these conditioned by the format of the Richard Dehmelt poem which inspired this piece? Then again, might this be irrelevant given the seamless and sheer cohesion of Karajan's conception as a whole?

PQ I have been puzzling over this! There are passing moments of insecurity (plunging and then climbing into D minor, around 2'00" into track 2) which sound as thrilling and as narratively driven in their way as are the unanimity and rhetorical strength of those *Pesante* (track 3) statements. Yet for all Schoenberg's careful matching of theme to text, it seems to me that he's too musical a composer to map one directly onto the other. As coached by Karajan, the BPO's response to Dehmelt's poem is immediate and specific – whether in setting the nocturnal scene at the opening, or at the start of the *Adagio* where the lover offers the woman reassurance. Far more so than their later DG recording, which sounds like an attempt by James Levine to out-Karajan Karajan.

RW Funny that you mention Levine, as his overly histrionic account puts me in mind of Karajan's live version from the Royal Festival Hall 30 years ago. For me, it's the over-wrought and almost claustrophobic string sound that I find hard to take, rather than the interpretation per se (barely

Books



Jeremy Nicholas recommends a magisterial new Chopin biography:

'Walker's overriding goal is to provide a "corrective biography", one that debunks the many myths attached to Chopin'



David Fanning welcomes some personal reflections on Shostakovich:

'Johnson's path is a psycho-analytical one; rather literally so, because the book is as much about his own pathology as it is about the music'

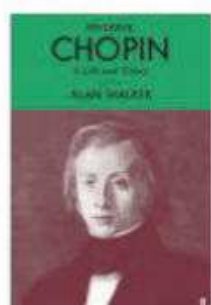
Fryderyk Chopin

A Life and Times

By Alan Walker

Faber & Faber, HB, 768pp, £30

ISBN 978-0-571-34855-8



This new biography of Chopin took 10 years of research and uses a vast cache of primary sources located in archives in Warsaw, Paris, London, New York and Washington DC. If it is not 'the most comprehensive biography of the composer to appear in English' (to quote the publisher's blurb), it is certainly the thickest. Including the catalogue of Chopin's works and the author's sources, it runs to 700 pages.

Alan Walker, professor emeritus at Canada's McMaster University, is the author of definitive biographies of Franz Liszt and Hans von Bülow, and is unusually well versed in the music and mores of the 19th century. He brings his considerable scholarship and narrative skills to a subject that continues to fascinate because, though his music speaks directly to the heart and the intellect, Chopin the man has always been an enigma.

The account of his birth and formative years in his native Poland is, at 179 pages, longer than many accounts of his entire (tragically short) life. A period that can often be read as a necessary but enervating prelude before the start of his career proper in Paris is detailed, assiduously researched and measured in its pacing. What and who exactly were the various people and experiences that shaped so singular a personality and musician? Walker tackles the always intriguing question of Chopin's sexuality: his crush on the young mezzo-soprano Konstancja Gładowska petered out like every other relationship with a woman with the single exception of the trouser-wearing, cigar-smoking George Sand. A letter from Chopin to his close friend Tytus Woyciechowski is quoted:

'You don't like to be kissed. Allow me to do so today ... I just want to caress you and be with you ... Give me your lips, dearest lover ...' Even giving the greatest allowance for the extravagant forms of address in the Polish language, this suggests an intimate familiarity; yet Walker is 'much inclined to doubt' Chopin's supposed homosexuality, conceding that we 'cannot know for sure'. (There are no extant letters from Tytus to Chopin.) Whatever view one takes, Chopin at 19 (or, for that matter, at any age) was never the red-blooded heterosexual in the manner of, say, Liszt, Schumann or Berlioz.

Among 56 black-and-white illustrations is a picture of *El Mallorquin*, the paddle steamer that took Chopin and George Sand to Majorca, as well as the famous 1847 Bisson daguerreotype (long thought to be from 1849; see opposite) but not the 'second' photograph of Chopin taken in the same location and discovered in 2016. Some 173 music examples are scattered neatly throughout the text, useful for those who read and play the music but not in any way off-putting for the general reader. In fact, one of the most successful elements of this book is that though it concerns a classical musician, with many a digression into musicological territory, Walker wears his scholarship lightly so that a little novelistic colour, when appropriate, is never out of place ('Chopin boarded the diligence, the postilion blew his horn, and the old tollgate disappeared from view ... Although he did not know it, he was leaving his homeland forever').

There are, nonetheless, on almost every page little nuggets for the pianophile to savour. I for one had never noticed the self-quote (from the F minor Concerto) in the *Lento con gran espressione* Nocturne discovered in 1875 by Chopin's first biographer Marcell Antoni Szulc. Other Chopin biographies boast far greater analytical detail of the music, and by no means does every work written by Chopin receive a mention here. In the context of this study, that seems to be a wise choice. For one thing, the book would have become unmanageably long but, for

another, though Walker's commentary will often compel the reader to consider certain works (and passages) in a new light, his overriding goal is to provide what the publishers tout as a 'corrective biography'. That is one that debunks the many myths and misconceptions attached to Chopin. For instance, who was present at the deathbed, as opposed to who claimed to be there? What music was heard by the dying composer? What exactly happened to his effects immediately afterwards – and why? Walker, understandably but nevertheless somewhat *de haut en bas*, misses no opportunity to point out the shortcomings of earlier biographers, finger-wagging more in sorrow than in anger in the extensive footnotes (these, mercifully, are attached to the bottom of each page and not tucked away at the far end of the book).

Walker leaves no stone unturned, no source unconsidered in his mission to provide, once and for all, a complete and factually accurate account of Chopin's life. Authoritative, exhaustive and eminently readable, this study should obviate the need for a similar endeavour for many years to come. **Jeremy Nicholas**

How Shostakovich Changed my Mind

By Stephen Johnson

Notting Hill Editions, HB, 152pp, £14.99

ISBN 978-1-910-74945-1



It is a well-worn cliché that criticism tells us as much about its author as about its object. Commentators and readers simply have to accept the fact and move on. Yet there is something about Shostakovich that challenges us more than almost any other music. It's something to do with the high voltage of his ideas – be they borrowed from 'real life', or be they (self-)quotations or allusions – which combine with their dramatic unfolding in time (applying his extensive experience



A daguerreotype of Chopin from 1847, one of the most famous of all composer photographs

with stage and screen) and combine again with the fraught circumstances of his life, with the result that we sense a more communal level of meaning, if only we had the wit to work it out. After all, as Stephen Johnson writes (quoting Roger Scruton), and as plenty before them have observed, Shostakovich says 'We' rather than 'I'.

So why do 'we' still disagree so much about him?

For Johnson the path forwards is a psycho-analytical one; rather literally so, because the book is as much about his own pathology as it is about the music. He lays bare the diagnosis of his bipolar disorder, the role of his mother in fostering the condition, and that of his wife in helping him through it. And he maps all this on to his powerful empathy with the music: with the fine lines it treads between utopia and dystopia, between order and chaos, suffering and hope, and with its symbolic depictions of survival. All of these are harder to elaborate on than political exegesis, but so much more rewarding.

Johnson focuses on the usual suspects: Symphonies Nos. 4, 5, 7, 8, 9 and 10, and the Eighth String Quartet, with sideways glances at half a dozen other works, their circumstances of composition, plus the composer's periodic falls from official grace. Few, if any, of his observations

are unfamiliar to those versed in the Shostakovich literature. But the book's USP is its splicing of musical commentaries not just with candid self-revelations but also with thoughts on neurology, aesthetics, literature and philosophy.

How Shostakovich Changed my Mind is short enough and eloquent enough to read comfortably at a single two-hour stretch, without skipping over a single word. True, it is not a scholarly tome, and it has no pretensions to be so. There are no footnotes, no sub-headings, no bibliography and no index, which could be frustrating for anyone wanting to relocate a favourite passage. There is little sign of awareness of the Shostakovich secondary literature, and no urge to engage with it. But given that the basic tone is confessional, all these trappings are arguably beside the point. The potential value resides in comparing Johnson's perceptions of Shostakovich with one's own, whether that results in nods of assent or frowns of disapproval.

The problem is that engagement with the literature could have supported and enriched the commentaries, while on the other hand protecting them from reductionism or plain fallacy. So there are times I wish the book had gone through at least a minimal peer-review process, to

ensure that Johnson's personal agenda was not tipping him over from illumination to distortion.

For example, he quotes Aleksey Tolstoy's famous summary of the Fifth Symphony as 'the formation of a personality'. 'In other words', Johnson glosses, 'it depicted the emergence of a proper, reconstructed Soviet personality.' But those are indeed other words, and they are not Tolstoy's. In fact they arguably misrepresent him. Granted, the idea of smoothing the path towards Shostakovich's rehabilitation was the order of the day. But Tolstoy, famed for his science fiction and children's books, was far more than merely 'Stalin's trusted cultural spokesman'. He was intelligent enough to be seeking an accommodation with the emerging tenets of Socialist Realism without abjectly submitting, just as Shostakovich himself was, and his summary of the Fifth Symphony is probably as perceptive as any could be in five words. The idea that cries out to be admitted is that far from presenting a counter-example, Tolstoy is actually validating the psychological interpretation that Johnson himself is driving at.

Then, when we get to the Eighth Quartet, Johnson trots out the story told by Lev Lebedinsky about taking away the pills that the composer was going to use to commit suicide, then giving them to the composer's son for safekeeping. Even Wikipedia knows that Maxim Shostakovich has flatly denied Lebedinsky's tale. But Johnson uses it as a key plank both for interpreting the quartet and for setting up the harrowing account of his own proximity to suicide. The trouble with this is that such stories as Lebedinsky's, by mere virtue of their vividness, tend to get recycled as fact, as this one was for years in A level Music set-work guidance notes. The Eighth Quartet is dark and complex enough without it, and such shakily founded accretions do it a disservice.

Yet there is so much honesty and candour in this book that this cannot be the last word. Many readers will surely find ideas in it that resonate with their own experience of Shostakovich's music, and be grateful for having so many of them gathered so tightly together. One that hits the bull's eye is from the late Manashir Yakubov, whose main legacy is his work on the mighty ongoing 150-volume Shostakovich Complete Edition. For Yakubov, for Johnson, and for me, Shostakovich expresses 'the contradictory nature of our existence in a condensed, undiluted way. And that is why we need him so much.' Let's take it from there.

David Fanning

THE GRAMOPHONE COLLECTION

Couperin's *Leçons de ténèbres*

To mark the 350th anniversary this month of Couperin's birth, **Lindsay Kemp** surveys recordings of this set of three intimate yet powerful sacred works for one and two voices with continuo and makes his top choices

What would you say is the greatest church music of the Baroque? Bach's Passions and Monteverdi's *Vespers*, obviously. Some of Handel's oratorios too, if you really count them as sacred music. Maybe certain shorter works by Purcell or Charpentier? But how many people would think to suggest three austere-looking pieces by François Couperin for solo voices and continuo, setting unrelentingly gloomy texts from the Lamentations of Jeremiah and composed for intimate performance conditions during the dark hours of Holy Week?

The *Leçons de ténèbres* are not universally known, but they have their following – a devoted one who can find it difficult not to swoon just at the thought of them. And, for sure, it is the incomparable beauty of these pieces that grabs you first. But the more familiar you become with their concentrated emotional atmosphere, the more you come to realise that it is the heart-stopping loveliness of the vocal lines, the expressive pangs of the attendant harmonies (Couperin employs a sturdy chromatic palette worthy of Monteverdi or Carissimi) and the acute sensitivity and total seriousness with which the music identifies with its text that make this church music of unimpeachable nobility. If Couperin's harpsichord music places him for us in the urbane milieu of the French court, as a poet of chiefly secular sensibilities, this great liturgical masterpiece is proof of an exquisite gift for the spiritual as profound as any in the Baroque.

The tradition of performing musical settings during Holy Week of words from the Lamentations deploring the degradation of Jerusalem after defeat by the Babylonians in 586BC – and which the liturgical context

naturally invites us to associate with the deepening sufferings of Jesus – was not an exclusively French one; but when Couperin published his around 1715, he was joining a line of settings by his countrymen that already included beautiful examples by Lambert, Charpentier and Lalande. The texts were intended for Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday, but it was normal in Paris to bring the performances forward to the afternoon of the previous day so that more people could come and hear them. The singers were often nuns, but sometimes artists from the Opéra were engaged, much to the disapproval of some observers – one complained of singers pulling back the curtain behind which they were performing 'to smile at friends in the audience'. Wherever – and however – they took place, they must have had considerable power to move, and not just in the music; the word *ténèbres* refers to the darkness that gradually overtook the church as 15 candles were extinguished one by one.

The full text of the Lamentations runs to nine lessons, three for each of the three days. Couperin's settings are only of the three for Maundy Thursday, but in his preface he stated that he intended to complete the set; if he ever did, that music is sadly now lost. Like his predecessors, he made use of expressive, richly ornamented vocal lines over continuo accompaniment in the flexible declamatory manner of operatic recitative, while other common features were the easy assimilation of Gregorian plainchant melody into the opening invocation 'Incipit lamentatio Jeremiae prophetae' ('Here begins the lamentation of Jeremiah the Prophet'), as well as for some of the exquisitely wrought melismatic settings of the Hebrew letters (Aleph, Beth,

Ghimel and so on) which in the Bible headed each chapter of the text, like an acrostic. The final section of each *leçon*, 'Jerusalem, convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum' ('Jerusalem, return to the Lord your God'), also gets special treatment, being more lyrical than the main sections and featuring a heightened expressive contribution from the continuo bass. The scoring of the sequence also reflects the intensifying effect of the darkening church by setting the first two *leçons* for one voice, and the third for two.

RECORDED BEGINNINGS: OLD STYLE - AND FEATURING SOME MALE SINGERS

The recording history of the *Leçons de ténèbres* goes back 80 years, and listening to almost 30 recordings for this article has revealed something to me that I hadn't previously realised: this is remarkably robust music, so well constructed that its essential character cannot be undermined. It was also surprising to find that performance styles have not changed all that much over the years. There are limits to how varied an ensemble of one or two voices with keyboard and bass viol can sound, but apart from a general (though not universal) quickening of pace, a growing ease with French Baroque ornamentation and an increased tendency towards French-pronounced Latin, there are few developments that one might ascribe definitively to the arrival of the 'early music movement'. Couperin's music, it seems, is of such high quality that, like Bach's, it already tells you pretty much how to perform it.

This survey will only concern itself with recordings of all three of Couperin's *leçons*, but an exception can be made in order to fill



The Babylonians' siege of Jerusalem - which is commented upon in the Lamentations of Jeremiah - as depicted in the 10th-century Seu d'Urgell Beatus

in a little early history. The first recording on disc seems to have been made in 1936, when tenors Hugues Cuénod and Paul Derenne (soloists a few months later in Nadia Boulanger's famous recording of Monteverdi's *Zefiro torna*) recorded the *Troisième leçon*, albeit with added strings (and trumpet!) and a female choir for the Hebrew letters (recorded for French HMV; available as a download on the album 'Great Voices of the Opera III'). It survives as an overcoloured but well-meant curiosity, but Cuénod was to revisit Couperin in more authentic style in 1950 (Allegro, 4/52; available as a download) with the *Première leçon* - a recording that Stravinsky, for one, took notice of both for the music and for the singer.

Hugues Cuénod finally got round to doing all three *leçons* in around 1953, in a performance remarkable for the integrity of his measured and beautifully sustained *haut-contre* - these are easily the longest performances. Ornamentation is stylistically much improved in comparison with the

1950 recording, but although there is a strong structural demarcation between intensity in the Latin sections and a more withdrawn, unearthly sound for the Hebrew letters, there is not a lot of variety in his text delivery - line is everything. His partner in the *Troisième leçon*, **Gino Sinimberghi**, is more of a conventional *bel canto* tenor, whose somewhat preening little swoops seem out of place both in this music and in this ardent performance.

In 1954, Canadian soprano Pierrette Alarie (with Basia Retchitzka) produced a bright, lively and stylish account of the complete *Leçons de ténèbres* for London Ducretet-Thomson Records (9/56 - nla) which, though its letters are eccentrically rushed and cheerful, is well worth sampling via YouTube (a CD was never issued); and in the same year there was a more serious version directed by Laurence Boulay, principally featuring **Janine Collard** (joined in the *Troisième leçon* by **Nadine Sautereau**). Slower than Alarie but still considerably swifter than Cuénod, it is probably the most

stylishly convincing of all the pre-1970s versions, even with the unnecessary addition of violins to the letters of the *Troisième leçon*. Collard's delivery is full voiced and powerful, like a Dido, but she is given space for it by a largish acoustic and a church-organ accompaniment that is not afraid to open the reeds or compile an angry registration for 'in die irae furoris sui'.

Although, given their origins, we tend to associate the *Leçons de ténèbres* with soprano voices, it is interesting that some of the recordings that first brought them to a wider public were by men. Couperin would have had no objection to this; they were clearly conceived for female voices, but his preface made clear that performance by others was permissible, transposed if need be. After Cuénod, then, it was the turn of countertenor **Alfred Deller**, first with a 1960 recording made with an ensemble that included Desmond Dupré (more usually his lute accompanist) on viola da gamba, and then only seven years later with another, this time with organist Michel Chapuis

among the players. This second is the more successful, its ornamentation being more convincingly assumed into a flowing line than in the rather lurching 1960 version, which also suffers from some irritating *détaché* notes at cadences. The tenor in the 1967 *Troisième leçon*, **Philip Todd**, is also a better match than the oratorio-style Wilfred Brown, and Deller's own voice, though always as compelling as ever in its timbre and quality of suspension, sounds more settled in the later version.

1970s: ADVENT OF A 'NEW STYLE'

Thus far, all the recordings of the *Leçons de ténèbres* had featured the same singer in the first two *leçons*, with a second joining for the third. In 1977, however, came the first to do what is now the norm, allocating the first and second to different singers who then come together for the third. The singers in question were the sopranos **Judith Nelson** and **Emma Kirkby**, a pairing much favoured at the time by Christopher Hogwood, who plays the chamber organ here. This is also the first recording that we can consider outside the 'historical' category, its grasp of what we now think of as French Baroque style – particularly in the vocal ornaments and some deliciously subtle use of *notes inégales* by Kirkby – helping it still to sound pretty up to date today. Perhaps a certain emotional coolness and lack of dynamic variety gives it away as being from the 1970s, but that is made up for by the bright clarity of the singing, the sharp definition of the continuo playing and the sublime matching of voices in duet. This is early Kirkby, too, when her voice was at its most strikingly pure; her downwards-winding first entry on the Hebrew letter 'Vau' in the *Seconde leçon* is like a visitation from heaven.

The 'single-singer' format was not yet dead, though, when countertenor **René Jacobs** came to the work in 1983 with a high-powered continuo team of Wieland



Couperin followed in the footsteps of Lalande (left) and Charpentier

Kuijken, Konrad Junghänel and William Christie. Jacobs's vocal delivery is not as mannered here as he has been at other times (further evidence of this music's power over the performer), and his essentially dramatic approach is typically intelligent, relishing the harmonies and expressive intervals in preference over line and momentum, and emphasising the letters' structural function by slightly 'depersonalising' them. **Vincent Darras**, the

second singer in the *Troisième leçon*, is a strangely hooty choice of partner.

Another stylistic development came in 1985 when tenor Jean Belliard introduced the nasal tang of French pronunciation into his recording (with Hervé Lamy in the *Troisième leçon*), but his performance is otherwise not the most mellifluous or happily recorded (Chant du Monde, 9/86 – nla). Of more interest are the decade's other two recordings. In 1987, **Ann Monoyios** and **Monique Zanetti** offered plenty of interest, from the cool but fragile and tender purity of Monoyios to the harder, more impassioned manner of Zanetti, to the way they somehow find a happy balance in duet. This is a bold and committed performance that never slips into the routine. The same can be said of the 1988 version by Guillemette Laurens and Mieke van der Sluis, and directed from the organ by Boulay, 34 years after her first recording (Erato, 8/90 – nla). The singing is emphatic

in its attention to text, lingering over certain words at risk of damage to line (and sometimes tuning), but lending an expressive freedom with results that are at times greatly affecting. The dark-toned and declamatory Laurens conjures a real sense of desolation at 'Jerusalem, convertere' in the *Première leçon*, and the cooler, churchier Van der Sluis a feeling of regret and longing in the second. The differences of approach and vocal character do not, however, make for quite such a beautiful *Troisième leçon*.

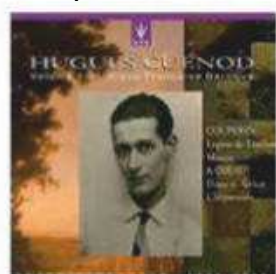
Countertenors were back on the case in 1990 when **James Bowman** and **Michael Chance** recorded the *Leçons de ténèbres* with Robert King. This was when Bowman's voice was probably at its richest, and it is wonderful to hear him open up the tone so inspiringly at times. Chance, too, is lyrically very fine, but it is interesting that neither singer seems entirely comfortable with French ornamentation; some embellishments are even left out.

HISTORIC CHOICE

Cuénod and Sinimberghi *tens*

LYS 140/41 (now on Global Village Music, iTunes)

The Collard stands up well, and Deller is always worth hearing, but Cuénod's glorious



haut-contre, a voice that could belong in any modern-day French Baroque opera production, really owns the music in his ardent, pioneering performance.

BEST NON-SOPRANO VERSION

Jacobs and Darras *countertens*

Harmonia Mundi © HMA195 1133

Cuénod and Deller are truly remarkable, ever compelling in their hauntingly distinctive



timbres and expressive integrity, but Jacobs is on good vocal form in 1983, and seems to have been the first really to get inside the way Couperin uses his text.

BEST DRAMATIC VERSION

Grimm and Zomer *sops*

Channel Classics © CCSSA20306

Drama there is in this music, and several performances have looked to express things



more openly and directly, making the connection between the manner of certain passages and that of *tragédie lyrique*. This balanced version makes a pressing case.

The following year, **Gérard Lesne** sounds more at home with them than the Englishmen: he is smoother, more even-toned and more idiomatic too. The echoey space of Fontevraud Abbey helps him, but the instruments are left rather distant – and the tape editor seems to have fought with the acoustic and lost.

Two recordings from French stables in the mid-1990s make an interesting pair. First, in 1996 and representing William Christie's Les Arts Florissants, we have **Sophie Daneman** and **Patricia Petibon**. In the *Première leçon* Daneman, despite a projected and wavery sound, finds a rather sensuous and teasing angle; you can certainly picture her smiling at the audience, though she does get more serious as the music goes on. The 'Vau' of the flutier Petibon is so like Kirkby's that it could have been modelled on it, and her use of *inégaie* is likewise very pleasing. The two voices do not go together particularly well, however, in the *Troisième leçon*. A year later, and Les Talens Lyriques were responding with a pair of star French sopranos, **Sandrine Piau** and **Véronique Gens**. Recorded at the abbey church in Saint-Antoine-l'Abbaye with Christophe Rousset on the big organ, it requires a fullish sound from the singers, whose delivery style clearly owes much to *tragédie lyrique* (there is even one of those little upward gasps on the word 'dolor', for all the world as if it were 'hélas!'). Excellent though both singers are at this style, Piau finds it harder to marry it to the atmosphere of the music than does Gens, who strikes an excellent balance between volume and intimacy.

The last recording of the century was not a high-profile one, but in 1999 **Catherine Greuillet** and **Isabelle Desrochers** produced a forthright, intelligent and attractive reading, perfectly balanced and positioned against a busy Olivier Vernet on the church organ at Saint-Rémy, Dieppe.

AN EXOTIC ANGLE IS INTRODUCED

There's no doubt that the melismatic Hebrew letters provide some of the most striking moments in the *Leçons de ténèbres* ('Vau' must be among the most heart-swelling eight bars in all of Baroque music), and the musicologist Philippe Beaussant has speculated tantalisingly that they could themselves have been distantly descended from lost Jewish chants. This 'exotic' angle informs the recording made in 2002 by Jean-Christophe Frisch's group VXIII-21 Musique de Lumières, into which various Arabic and Hebrew chants are interspersed. The *leçons* themselves are sung with much use of expressive contrast by **Stéphanie Révidat** and **Cyrille Gerstenhaber**, and make colourful use of a church organ



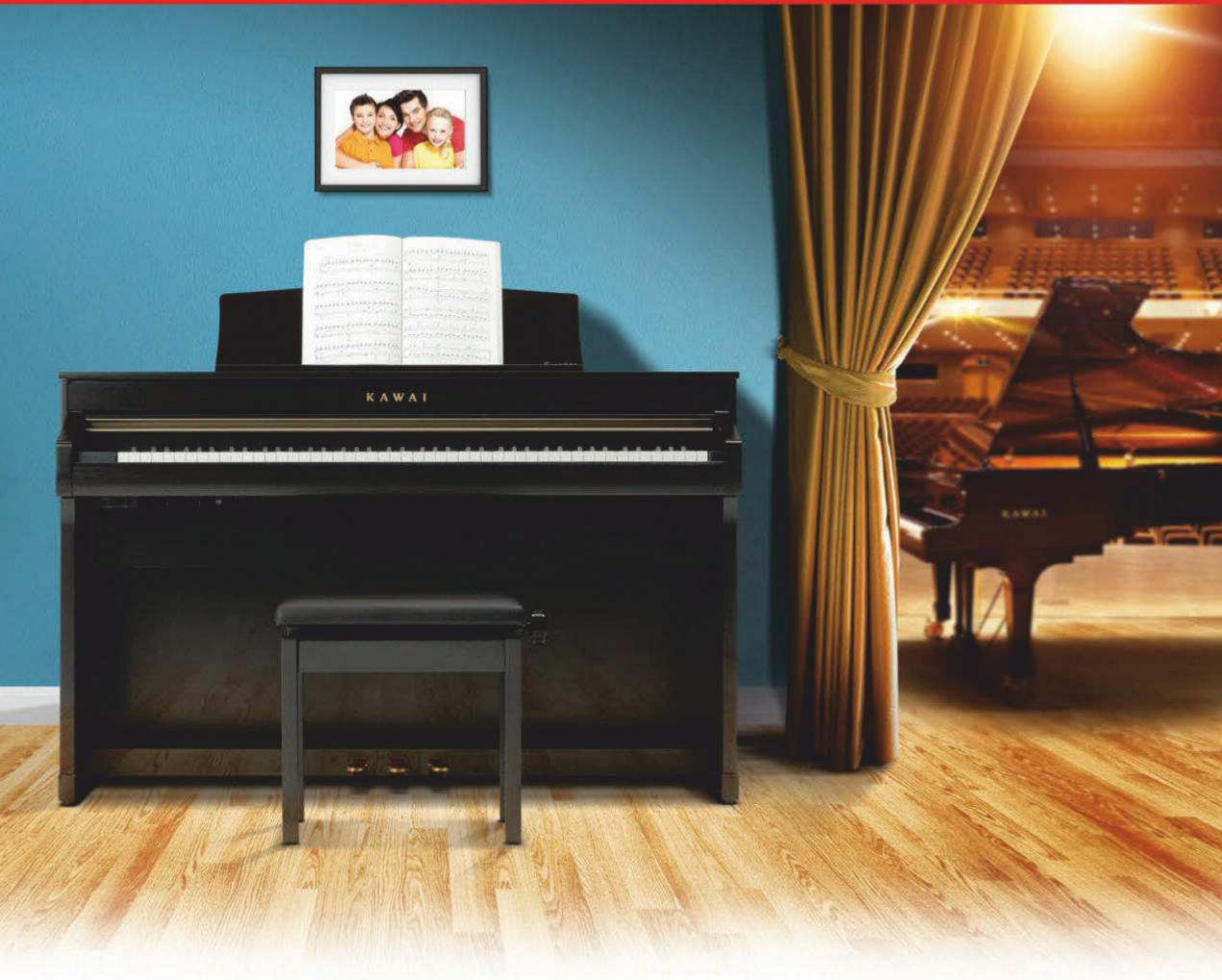
Director-countertenor René Jacobs (pictured here in the '80s) is one of the few males to record the set

with Bachian short chords to accompany 'Nun', a tremulant stop in 'Daleth' and an angry outburst at 'Viderunt eam hostes, et deriserunt sabbata eius' ('Her foes gloated and mocked her Sabbaths'). On the other hand, the recording by Kirsten Blaise and

Salomé Haller with Martin Gester's Le Parlement de Musique, from the same year (Assai, A/03 – nla), dispenses the letters with hurried brusqueness as mere index points between the more openly expressed Latin sections. Perhaps their urgent but

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

RECORDING DATE / ARTISTS	RECORD COMPANY (REVIEW DATE)
c1953 Cuénod ^{1,2,3} , Sinimberghi ³ , Harand <i>va da gamba</i> Holetschek <i>kybd</i>	Global Village Music via iTunes (6/55 ^R)
1954 Collard ^{1,2,3} , Sautereau ³ , Mócquoirt <i>va da gamba</i> Pierront <i>kybd</i> / Boulay	BnF via iTunes
1960 Deller ^{1,2,3} , Brown ³ , Dupré <i>va da gamba</i> Gabb <i>kybd</i>	Musical Concepts (F) MC197
1967 Deller ^{1,2,3} , Todd ³ , Perulli <i>va da gamba</i> Chapuis <i>kybd</i>	Harmonia Mundi (M) HMA195 210 (6/78 ^R)
1977 Nelson ^{1,3} , Kirkby ^{2,3} , Ryan <i>va da gamba</i> Hogwood <i>kybd</i>	L'Oiseau-Lyre (S) 478 6862 (6/78 ^R)
1983 Jacobs ^{1,2,3} , Darras ³ , W Kuijken <i>va da gamba</i> Christie <i>kybd</i>	Harmonia Mundi (S) HMA195 1133 (3/86 ^R)
1987 Monoyios ^{1,3} , Zanetti ^{2,3} , Lasla <i>va da gamba</i> Monteilhet <i>theorbo</i> / Coudurier <i>kybd</i>	available to stream on Qobuz
1990 Bowman ^{1,3} , Chance ^{2,3} , Caudle <i>va da gamba</i> King <i>kybd</i>	Hyperion (M) CDH55455 (3/92 ^R)
1991 Lesne ^{1,2,3} , Dugardin ³ , Cocset <i>va da gamba</i> Monteilhet <i>theorbo</i> Ablitzer <i>kybd</i>	Harmonic (F) HCD9140
1996 Daneman ^{1,3} , Petibon ^{2,3} , Lasla <i>va da gamba</i> / Christie <i>kybd</i>	Erato (M) 0630 17067-2 (7/97)
1997 Piau ^{1,3} , Gens ^{2,3} , Balssa <i>va da gamba</i> Rousset <i>kybd</i>	Decca (M) 466 776-20H (4/00)
1999 Greuillet ^{1,3} , Desrochers ^{2,3} , Foulon <i>va da gamba</i> / Vernet <i>kybd</i>	Ligia (F) 15113603
2002 Révidat ^{1,3} , Gerstenhaber ^{2,3} , Andreyev <i>vc</i> Geiger <i>kybd</i> / Frisch	K617 (F) K617416 (A/03)
2003 Grimm ^{1,3} , Zomer ^{2,3} , van Laarhoven <i>va da gamba</i> Fentross <i>theorbo</i> van Delft <i>kybd</i>	Channel Classics (F) CSSA20306 (8/06)
2003 Taylor ^{1,3} , Blaze ^{2,3} , Manson <i>va da gamba</i> Cummings <i>kybd</i>	BIS (F) BIS-CD1346 (8/05)
2005 Kirkby ^{1,3} , Mellon ^{2,3} , Medlam <i>va da gamba</i> Charlston <i>kybd</i>	BIS (F) BIS-CD1575 (5/08)
2008 Leclair ^{1,3} , Warnier ^{2,3} , Perrette ³ / Mandrin <i>kybd</i>	Ambronay (F) AMY018 (8/09)
2011 Sampson ^{1,3} , Kielland ^{2,3} , Heinrich <i>va da gamba</i> Sayce <i>theorbo</i> King <i>kybd</i>	Vivat (F) VIVAT102 (5/13)
2012 Zanetti ^{1,3} , Masset ^{2,3} , J Dunford <i>va da gamba</i> Holland, Dupouy <i>kybd</i>	Herissons (F) LH09
2013 Watson ^{1,3} , Dennis ^{2,3} , Lasla <i>va da gamba</i> T Dunford <i>lute</i> / Cohen <i>kybd</i>	Hyperion (F) CDA68093 (5/17)
2013 Bennani ^{1,3} , Druet ^{2,3} , Abramowicz <i>va da gamba</i> Rivoa <i>kybd</i> / Dumestre <i>theo</i>	Alpha (F) ALPHA957 (2/15)
2015 Crowe ^{1,3} , Watts ^{2,3} , Rees <i>va da gamba</i> McCartney <i>theorbo</i> / Bates <i>kybd</i>	Harmonia Mundi (F) HMU80 7659 (10/16)
2017 Jeffery ^{1,3} , Magouët ^{2,3} , Blanchard <i>va da gamba</i> Galletier <i>theorbo</i> Meisel <i>kybd</i>	Mirare (F) MIR358 (8/18)



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THE FUTURE OF THE PIANO

forceful vocal projection is also the reason they are somewhat distantly placed in the balance, though even then the room acoustic is not quite brought under control.

Perhaps a better blend of drama and lyricism, however, came the following year from **Anne Grimm** and **Johannette Zomer**, partly by slowing the pace right down so that the words can be deliberated over and savoured (as in the drawn-out 'requiem' in the *Première leçon*) while still being part of a sustained overall musical line. There is an exceptional and deeply affecting

tenderness to these performances, and the singing is lovely, but some may feel that there are times when they should pick up the pace.

LAST ALL-MALE HURRAH, FOR NOW - AND A GOOD DECADE FOR THE LEÇONS

Female singers had pretty much come to monopolise these pieces by this time, but 2003 did bring one (so far) last all-male hurrah. Of all the countertenor recordings, that of **Daniel Taylor** and **Robin Blaze** is the smoothest and most aurally attractive, though perhaps not the most interesting from the interpretational point of view, making it hard for it to support a generally slow pace. Gender normality was restored (by the same label!) two years later by **Emma Kirkby** and **Agnès Mellon**, early music goddesses whose voices would perhaps have been better suited to these pieces a couple of decades earlier (Kirkby did, of course, record it in 1977). Nevertheless, Kirkby's grace is undiminished, and Mellon still shows the kind of agile, sprung declamation that made her such an important early member of Les Arts Florissants.

The *Leçons de ténèbres* took their place in a larger liturgical setting in the 2008 recording directed from the organ in the abbey church of Saint-Antoine-l'Abbaye by Emmanuel Mandrin, and this may explain why – despite perfectly adequate singing from sopranos **Dorothee Leclair**, **Eugénie Warnier** and **Juliette Perret** – the results are a touch perfunctory. Singing on a different level, however, is to be heard on the next recording (2011), featuring a supremely poised **Carolyn Sampson** and the moving vocal timbre of mezzo-soprano **Marianne Beate Kielland**. These are unhurried performances that smoothly combine spacious lyricism (sometimes with extra ornamentation) with dramatic



Hasnaa Bennani, under Vincent Dumestre, brings vocal allure to the Leçons

moments such as the snapped 'dedit me Dominus in manu, de qua non potero surgere' ('The Lord has delivered me into the hands of those from whom I cannot rise up') towards the end of the *Troisième leçon*.

Alas, the quality of singing is not at this level in the 2012 recording by **Monique Zanetti** and **Françoise Masset**, and neither is the recording. Yet the 2010s have been a good decade for these pieces. In 2013, Jonathan Cohen and his Arcangelo gave **Katherine Watson** and **Anna Dennis** their chance with them, and they grabbed it in performances that are classically beautiful and subtly moving – Watson's *Première leçon* is especially touching.

And there is more high-class music-making in the version from Vincent Dumestre's ensemble Le Poème Harmonique, featuring the singing of **Hasnaa Bennani** and **Isabelle Druet** (2013). Bennani's account of the *Première leçon*, despite some very minor tuning issues, is an absolute treat, and the more incisive Druet is scarcely less to be enjoyed. To my ears the mood of this recording, which brings together vocal allure, emotional integrity and a relish of the work's expressive harmonic language in a glowing acoustic, is spot on.

Sadly, I can't summon a similar sympathy for the 2015 recording by **Lucy Crowe** and

TOP CHOICE

Bennani sop Druet mez

Alpha © ALPHA957

A tough call, and it can depend on your mood. Bennani and Druet are not big names, but the collective spirit of this performance, full of beauty but also heartfelt, subtle and wise while never overcomplicated, drew the right responses from me every time.



Elizabeth Watts with La Nuova Musica. Of all the versions so far, this is the one that sets out most single-mindedly to realise the drama of the music, an approach for which both of these fine singers are certainly equipped. Yet the operatic intensity with which they deliver the words (Watts almost shouts the first syllable of 'Peccatum') and a massive dynamic range (the second 'attendite' is frighteningly loud) simply seem too heavy and histrionic for this music. It's a strong and

committed attempt, but to my mind on the wrong track.

After which, the most recent recording (2017) by **Chantal Santon Jeffery** and **Anne Magouët**, with the chamber ensemble Les Ombres, feels like a return to normality, even if Jeffery's voice is itself a rather operatic one. The lighter-voiced Magouët is more in the right zone both vocally and stylistically, and altogether this is a perfectly acceptable version, if not a winner.

Which brings us to the question of who the 'winner' actually is. Music that relies so much on its singers is bound to divide opinion on a purely personal and emotional level, perhaps more than according to any intellectual or stylistic concerns. For that reason alone it is hard to make recommendations; there will probably be people, after all, who on these grounds are quite happy with Cuénod or Deller. But I'm going to assume that most listeners would want more modern recording standards, and that, given the choice available, will value a performance that releases the aching lyrical beauty of this music, is in sympathy with its style, knows how to make ornamentation work as a means of expression and recognises the solemn anguish of the text. 'I much prefer that which moves me than that which astonishes me,' Couperin himself once wrote, and on that basis the contenders for me would include Nelson and Kirkby, Monoyios and Zanetti, Laurens and Van der Sluis, Piau and Gens, Greuillet and Desrochers, Grimm and Zomer, Sampson and Kielland and Watson and Dennis. I'd be eternally happy listening to any of these, but if pushed for a choice I would say that it is the singing of Bennani and Druet, backed up discreetly but perfectly by members of Le Poème Harmonique, that carries the day. **G**

PERFORMANCES & EVENTS

Presenting live concert and opera performances from around the world and reviews of archived music-making available online to stream where you want, when you want

Orchestra Hall, Detroit & online on the orchestra's website

Cristian Măcelaru and Emanuel Ax visit the Detroit Symphony, November 9

The first of two live-streamed Detroit Symphony Orchestra concerts worthy of your attention this month sees a repeat invitation to fast-rising conductor Cristian Măcelaru, the next (2019) Chief Conductor of the WDR Symphony Orchestra Cologne, who readers in Scotland may well have seen open the Scottish Chamber Orchestra's season a couple of months ago. Măcelaru also recently took over from Marin Alsop as Chief Conductor and Director of the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music, so the first work on the programme, Andrew Norman's 2013 cycle of pieces, *Play*, is in good hands. Following on from that, Emanuel Ax is the soloist in Beethoven's Piano Concerto No 1.

dso.org

Metropolitan Opera, New York & cinemas worldwide

Marnie, November 10

Nico Muhly's first opera, *Two Boys*, was a co-production between London's ENO and the Met, which staged it in 2013: now follows his second opera for the New York house.

Set in the 1950s, it's a reimagining of Winston Graham's novel of the same name which also inspired the film by Alfred Hitchcock, about a beautiful, mysterious young woman who assumes multiple identities. Michael Mayer directs a production which apparently presents a fast-moving cinematic world, with the mezzo-soprano Isabel Leonard in the title role, and the baritone Christopher Maltman the man who pursues her with disastrous results. Robert Spano conducts.

metopera.org/season/in-cinemas/

Concertgebouw, Amsterdam & online

Tchaikovsky and Haydn from the Arctic Philharmonic Orchestra, November 11

Live streamed on the Concertgebouw's website, these Sunday morning concerts have the added advantage for armchair viewers of not containing an interval. This one looks especially interesting too, particularly for British viewers who may not be very familiar with Norway's Arctic Philharmonic. Kicking off the two-work programme is Haydn's Trumpet Concerto in E flat major, Pacho Flores (newly signed to Deutsche Grammophon) as soloist. Tchaikovsky's Symphony No 4 then provides a contrasting second half.

concertgebouw.nl

Grieghallen, Bergen

Edward Gardner conducts Bluebeard's Castle, November 14

Following on from a series of performances exploring Béla Bartók's major orchestral works, Edward Gardner and the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra now turn to the composer's one-act opera, *Bluebeard's Castle*, in a live streamed concert performance featuring Michelle DeYoung as Judith and John Relyea as Duke Bluebeard. The prelude meanwhile is entrusted, for real authenticity, to the Hungarian actor Pál Mácsai.

bergenphillive.no

The Gothenburg Concert Hall & online at GSOpay

Christian Zacharias brings Mozart to Gothenburg, November 14

Pianist and conductor Christian Zacharias joins the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra for an all-Mozart programme in this live streamed performance on GSOpay. First up is the serenade, the ever-popular *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*. Next he takes to the keyboard for the Piano Concerto No 20 in D minor, K466. The concert then closes with the *Linz* Symphony (No 36).

gso.se

ONLINE OPERA REVIEW

Hungary's popular national opera, Ferenc Erkel's *Bánk bán*, receives a performance by the country's State Opera

Erkel

Here's a rare opportunity in the West to learn more about Hungary's favourite opera than its name. *Bánk Bán* (that's 'Count' or, to give the character his job title, 'Viceroy' Bánk) is a fast-moving, tuneful three-act work whose special genius is the incorporation of nationalist folk and dance as the musical material of a Verdi-styled historical tragedy. The plot's main 'public' theme – political oppression by representatives of a foreign power (here Queen Gertrud and her German court favourites) – naturally played well in a mid-19th-century Hungary still unhappily ruled from Vienna. A rather sensationalist 'private' theme climaxes in



the drugged rape of Viceroy Bánk's wife Melinda by the Queen's brother Ottó and her pleading for forgiveness from her husband for this having happened.

Formally, there are big set-piece arias for both Bánk (the baritone Levente Molnár) and Melinda (Zita Szemere) and

an Italianate sequence of concerted finales. Yet the length and pacing of these, combined with the constant Hungarian colouring – there are also atmospheric folk-like intervals with cimbalom and solo winds – nudge us intriguingly forward into the freer, more symphonic world of Lehár and *verismo*. This recent Hungarian production – using elements of both

versions of the opera in existence – is especially well sung by its soloists, conducted with flair and colour by Balázs Kocsár and helpfully staged by Attila Vidnyánsky. **Mike Ashman**

Available to view, free of charge, until March 6, 2019 at operavision.eu

**National Kaohsiung Center for the Arts,
Taiwan & online in the Digital Concert Hall**
**Dudamel conducts the Berlin Philharmonic
on tour, November 14**

Gustavo Dudamel leads the great German orchestra on an Asian tour that takes in Taiwan. For their concert in the striking new concert hall in Kaohsiung in the south of Taiwan – and they are the first international orchestra to play there – they link Leonard Bernstein's Divertimento for Orchestra with a Bernstein favourite, Gustav Mahler's Fifth Symphony. The National Kaohsiung Center for the Arts and Culture, which only opens this month, is the work of the Dutch architect Francine Houben and her Mecanoo practice, and takes its inspiration from the banyan trees that grow in the area. Note the start time: 11am (GMT), 12pm (CET), 6am (EST) and, gulp, 3am (PST). dso.org

Konzerthaus Dortmund & Takt1

**Leif Ove Andsnes plays Brahms's
Piano Concerto No 1, November 15**

Lived streamed on Takt1, this Dortmund concert sees Herbert Blomstedt direct the Staatskapelle Dresden in a programme whose concept we like the sound of enormously: an all-Brahms offering that pairs the two major works he wrote in 1858: first, the Piano Concerto No 1 featuring Leif Ove Andsnes as soloist, and the the mighty Symphony No 1. konzerthaus-dortmund.de, takt1.com

**Orchestra Hall, Detroit & online on the
orchestra's website**

**Kuusisto brings Antheil's Over the Plains to
Detroit, November 17**

The second of the Detroit's worthy-of-your-attention dates this month shows off a piece you can't yet hear recorded it's so new: the demanding and technical effects-laden Violin Concerto that Icelandic composer Daníel Bjarnason, as the Iceland Symphony's Artist-in-Residence, wrote in 2017 for Finnish violinist Pekka Kuusisto. Rather appropriately it's a violinist-conductor on the podium too, in the shape of John Storgårds. Preceding this is another lesser-spotted work, American avant-garde composer George Antheil's short orchestral piece, *Over the Plains*, of 1945. The concert then climaxes with, coincidentally, the same work concluding the Arctic Philharmonic's aforementioned Amsterdam concert: Tchaikovsky's Symphony No 4. dso.org

Barbican Hall, London & medici.tv

**Donatella Flick Conducting Competition Final,
November 22**

Live streamed on medici.tv, the final of the Donatella Flick Conducting Competition sees three young European Union-based conductors battle it out not only to be

ONLINE CONCERT REVIEW

Alain Altinoglu leads the Royal Stockholm Phil in Bartók's masterpiece



Bartók

As an experienced conductor for the stage, Alain Altinoglu leads us right to the shore of Bluebeard's Lake of Tears at the opening of the 'Elegy' on his guided tour of Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra. He knows where the bodies are buried in this most ambivalent of orchestral showpieces. The deadpan humour of the second movement's 'Game of Pairs' was surely the composer's too. Stagy or cautious pauses slightly interrupt the uneasy progress of the first movement, and Altinoglu does not cultivate the unrelenting intensity of Iván Fischer's direction, or the moment-to-moment piquancy of detail that distinguishes Sir Simon Rattle's directorship of the piece in the Berlin Philharmonic's Digital Concert Hall.

It's handy when directors for both stage and screen can read a score – not

always a given – and David Tarrodi's filming matches Altinoglu's alert and lively handling of the score and his musicians. Intelligently focused if brief close-ups pay due attention to the fine solo winds of the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, as well as its notably well-blended trios of trumpets and trombones. We can see and feel, as well as hear, how the performance gains compelling momentum from the 'Elegy' onwards. There's even the not-so-common sight of musicians actually enjoying the virtuosity of their own and their colleagues' work in the irregular hora rhythms of the finale, handled by Altinoglu with a light and sure touch. Now in his third year at La Monnaie in Brussels, he's a modern maestro worth following.

Peter Quantrill

Available to view free of charge until October 2019 at konserthuset.se/en/play/

crowned the winner, but also to be named LSO Assistant Conductor. So, high stakes, which are then made all the higher with the knowledge that previous winners include LSO Principal Guest Conductor François-Xavier Roth. Roth himself is in fact sitting on the judging panel too, which is chaired by Lennox Mackenzie. Meanwhile other international figures on the panel include Yan Pascal Tortelier and Antonio Pappano. As for the repertoire, it's Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* Prelude, Kodály's *Dances of Galánta*, and also a competition first in the form of the three finalist conductors being joined onstage with the LSO by a soloist: Vadim Repin, performing Prokofiev's Second Violin Concerto.

iso.co.uk/iso-discovery/donatella-flick-iso-conducting-competition, medici.tv

**Royal Opera House, Covent Garden &
cinemas worldwide**

The Nutcracker, December 3

Well we couldn't not mention this one, could we? Not that Covent Garden's annual Christmas treat, borne aloft on Tchaikovsky's glorious score, needs much further explanation. However, the salient points for *this* festive season are that this is Peter Wright's much-loved 1984 production for the Royal Ballet, with Barry Wordsworth conducting the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House, and with the cast topped up by Anna Rose O'Sullivan as Clara, Marianela Nuñez as The Sugar Plum Fairy, Vadim Muntagirov as The Prince, and Marcelino Sambé as Hans-peter and The Nutcracker.

roh.org.uk/cinemas

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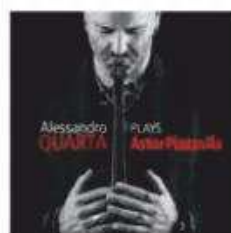
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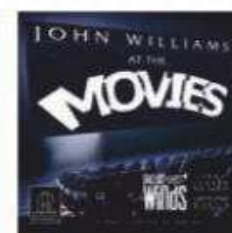


THIS MONTH An affordable new amp, the first headphones from Quad, and 40 years of a celebrated Brand Ambassador
Andrew Everard,
Audio Editor

NOVEMBER TEST DISCS



An intimate recording by Germany's IAN-productions distinguishes this striking set of works by Piazzolla played by Alessandro Quarta.



Big and detailed, this album of John Williams film music by the Dallas Winds under Jerry Junkin is a powerful Reference Recordings release.

New ways to make more of digital audio

From a standalone scaler to simpler wireless audio, the digital possibilities continue to grow



You may have thought the idea of a scaler was only to do with video, and upconverting legacy formats such as DVD to suit modern HD and 4K TVs. Not so: plenty of audio devices now employ this technology to upconvert digital datastreams to higher sampling rates and bit-depths, thus shifting any noise created in conversion way beyond audibility. It usually happens without the user knowing anything's going on, but now Chord Electronics has launched a new standalone unit, the Hugo M Scaler **1**, designed to upscale audio streams to a maximum 768kHz to feed its latest DACs, the DAVE, Qutest and Hugo TT 2.

The £3495 component can also be used with other DACs, subject to their being able to handle its output formats, and uses Chord designer Rob Watts's Watts Transient Alignment filtering, running on a hugely powerful processor. The technology here was first seen in the company's BLU MKII digital/CD transport, at twice the price of the new unit: with a comprehensive array of digital inputs – galvanically isolated USB-B, two BNC and two optical – the Hugo M Scaler can also be used as a 'digital hub' to feed multiple sources into a single DAC.

At the opposite end of the digital audio market, the i-box Ellipsis **2** is a little wireless speaker complete with Amazon Alexa voice control, all built into a wall-plug to avoid trailing wires. Giving access to services including Amazon Music, Spotify, TuneIn and iHeart Radio, as well

as locally stored music, the £60 Ellipsis can also form a multiroom system: up to eight of the units, or multiple third-party Alexa-capable products, can be combined and controlled. A dedicated app for both Android and iOS aids set-up, and i-box says the compact design means multiple units can also be used to ensure your Alexa voice commands can be picked up anywhere in the house.

On the subject of Alexa, new receivers from Denon and Marantz have been launched featuring not only the companies' HEOS multiroom audio capability, but also Alexa voice control using the HEOS 'skill' available for the Amazon voice control system. With an Alexa device such as one of Amazon's Echo range, it's possible to turn the receiver on or off, raise or lower the volume, and switch inputs to a specific source. The facility is available on a growing range of Denon and Marantz products, including the new Denon AVR-X4500H (9.2-channel, 200Wpc, £1499) and AVR-X3500H (7.2-channel, 180Wpc, £899), and the Marantz SR6013 (9x185W) and SR5013 (7x180W), at £1249 and £849 respectively. **3**

Another pairing of companies, Onkyo **4** and Pioneer, has announced that the Deezer music streaming service is now available across a wide range of products via a firmware download. The upgrade covers both AV and stereo receivers, along with all of the companies' network audio players, and brings access

to a new service Deezer Hi-Fi, which allows streaming in uncompressed 44.1kHz/16bit CD-quality audio.

For those playing music on their computer straight into a DAC via a USB Type B connection, the Audirvana Plus player software **5**, originally designed for Mac OS computers, is now available for Windows 10. With the same benefits as the existing Mac v3.2, plus a new user interface, Audirvana Plus for Windows 10 has the advantage of performing all the required digital processing before the signal is passed to the DAC. It plays music up to hi-res FLAC, WAV, AIFF, DSD, and MQA, integrates streaming services including Qobuz, Tidal HiFi, and HRA, and works with UPnP/DLNA network players. The price is \$74 or £64, plus VAT.

For those playing old, and potentially noisy, records, the SweetVinyl SugarCube SC-1, a £1550 unit **6** designed to remove clicks and pops from vinyl playback, is now available in the UK. Inserted between an external phono stage and your amplifier, it uses an algorithm developed by Silicon Valley-based SweetVinyl, converting the analogue signal to 192kHz/24bit for processing, and then back to analogue for output.

A bypass mode allows the user to compare the 'with' and 'without' sound, while a supplied USB fob allows the unit to be controlled by a dedicated app on Android and iOS smartphones and tablets. **G**

● REVIEW PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

Pioneer A-40AE

This affordable audiophile amplifier continues in the fine tradition of a very illustrious forebear, while bringing a modern twist to its facilities

There aren't too many affordable amplifiers one could consider as legendary: the A&R Cambridge A60 is probably one, and the original NAD 3020 certainly is, but there's no doubting the role of the Pioneer A-400 in establishing the idea of major Japanese corporations making 'UK tuned' models. The result of extensive lobbying by the UK sales operation over almost a decade, the A-400 hit the shops at the beginning of the 1990s as something very different: gone was the riot of buttons and knobs then popular on amps from the big Japanese names, and in its place a £230 stripped-down design with little more than volume and source selector controls.

If that made the A-400 look rather austere by then-current standards, the performance more than compensated, and the amplifier went on to achieve both critical acclaim and sales success. What's more, it led to an onslaught of tuned models, either made specifically for the British market or – some might claim – designed to appeal to the British taste in the hope of selling in other markets on the back of gaining some fame here.

Pioneer tried to repeat the success with further tuning and development of the A-400 idea: the A-400X was generally agreed not to be as good as the original, while the same trick was tried on the less expensive A-300 with mixed results. But by then the stable door wasn't worth shutting, as there was a veritable stampede of rival designs. On the plus side, the original A-400 retains something of a cult status: find one that hasn't been 'tweaked' or



PIONEER A-40AE

Type Integrated amplifier

Price £399

Power output 30Wpc into 8ohms

Analogue inputs MM phono, five line, power amp direct

Digital inputs Coaxial/optical (192kHz/24bit max)

Outputs Two pairs of speakers, headphones, line out

Tone controls Yes, bypassable

Accessories supplied Remote handset

Finishes Black, silver

Dimensions (WxHxD) 43.5x12.9x32.3cm

pioneer-audiovisual.eu

otherwise messed about with – and a lot of them were – and for £150 or so you can still get your hands on a very fine amplifier indeed.

Aimed at capturing both new hi-fi buyers and those wishing to modernise an existing system

All of which is background to the arrival of the Pioneer A-40AE amplifier we have here: while it doesn't make any overt giant-killing claims of the kind attributed to the 1990s amp, and is rather more generously appointed in terms of facilities, it's clearly cut from the same kind of cloth, and boasts plenty of in-house engineering designed to optimise its sound. And it sells for just on £400 which, if the trusty inflation calculator serves, is only a little less than the A-400 would be in 2018 terms.

Mind you, the markets confronting each are, or were, rather different: back in 1990, hi-fi separates was a buoyant sector, and many aspired to a CD player/amplifier/speakers set-up for their music, such that the A-400 shifted some 25,000 units in the UK in its first 18 months of life. These days the hi-fi-buying habit is greatly diminished, and the kind of young buyers thronging the shops almost 30 years ago have been replaced to a great extent by those who consume music via free streaming services on their phones, perhaps via a Bluetooth speaker if they are really keen.

Amplifiers such as the A-40AE, and the rest of the 'AE' range of which it's a part, are aimed at capturing both new hi-fi buyers and those wishing to modernise an existing system, and as a result the product we have here offers rather more flexibility than might be expected by those for whom an amp should be nothing more than that

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SUGGESTED PARTNERS

The A-40AE is an excellent affordable amplifier choice – here are some sources to feed it

BLUESOUND'S NODE 2 is a plain-looking, but highly capable, hi-res wireless streaming device, controlled by a dedicated app



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old idea of 'a straight wire with gain'. For example, as well as a generous range of analogue line inputs – five, plus a moving magnet phono stage for a turntable – the A-40AE also has both coaxial and optical digital inputs able to handle content at up to 192kHz/24bit, can drive two sets of speakers as well as pair of headphones, and has both tone and balance controls with a 'direct' button to bypass them.

In addition there's a loudness button, which certainly flies in the face of hi-fi minimalism but might just be useful to put some life back into the sound if you're forced to listen at very low levels, and a power amp direct function, combining an extra pair of inputs and a front panel button. This allows an incoming signal to bypass the source selection and volume control, and is handy if you want to combine the amplifier with the front left/right channel preouts on an AV receiver – of which Pioneer makes quite a few!

The A-40AE delivers 30W per channel into 8ohms, doubling into a 4ohm load, which may not seem much on paper but is more than adequate for most listening needs, and backs that up with the company's Direct Energy Design and Construction, which is all about optimising power supplies with minimal wiring to reduce losses, and a circuit layout built for low noise. The power supply itself uses separate windings for preamp, power amp and control functions, and the main power capacitors are the result of joint development work with specialist ELNA.

While the amplifier may be more complex than its ancestor of three decades ago, it's solidly built on a steel chassis with aluminium faceplate and knobs, while the speaker terminals are also of a high-quality type, using non-magnetic materials and chunky screw-down collars for those using bare wires or spade terminals. A comprehensive system remote completes the package.

PERFORMANCE

The A-40AE is by no means the most compact amp at this price level, but it makes up for its minimal extra bulk with a sound that's big and confident while at the same time detailed and refined. Despite that hardly class-leading 'Watts for the

money' figure, it's capable of driving and controlling even demanding speakers to great effect, and – provided you don't partner it with lightweight or overly forward designs – its clean, crisp treble and tight, well-defined bass will bring out all the vitality of a recording without over-exciting the high frequencies.

What this amplifier manages to deliver is a well-integrated sound with excellent scale and sparkle without ever straying into brashness or aggression – and should you find it a bit bright with your chosen speakers, the subtle action of the tone controls will let you get just the sound you require without impinging on the basic qualities of the overall presentation.

The Pioneer thrills with the way it reveals the rhythms and contrasts within an ensemble

I have to admit to not spending too much time with the Pioneer's phono stage – these days most of my music comes streamed from my servers – but listening to a few LPs was enough to reassure that it's good enough for use with reasonable budget turntables, and on a par with the A-40AE's line and digital inputs. All of which means it's really rather good, as the rest of the amp is a bit of a star, thanks to its sparky, captivating sound.

Play tightly performed chamber music and the Pioneer thrills with the way it reveals the rhythms and contrasts within an ensemble, while delivering a fluid, organic view of the whole piece; switch to solo piano and it delivers a wonderful sense of strings being struck and damped, and the body of the instrument within a realistic acoustic space; choose an orchestral work and the tight yet extended bass means the sound has good weight without swamping the insight the amp is offering into the various tonalities of the instruments.

Yes, this latest 'affordable audiophile' design may be some way from the stripped-down stablemate of three decades back, but in many ways it's conceptually the same: this would make a fine first-time buy, or will breath new life into a modestly-priced system. **G**

Or you could try...

The entry-level amplifier market isn't what it was, with many brands having pulled out of this sector over the years, but there's still a good choice for those on a tight budget, and the Pioneer is a fine example of the kind of performance available at this level.

NAD, and its C316BEE V2

One of the traditional budget



amp contenders has long been NAD, and its C316BEE V2 model comes in at a very attractive £299, despite offering a 40Wpc output and six analogue inputs including moving magnet phono, all packed into a slimline unit. There's a front-panel input for portable devices, defeatable tone adjustments and remote control, making this a real value for money contender. Find out more at nadelectronics.com

Rotel A10

Rotel is another



seasoned campaigner in the affordable audiophile sector, and its stripped-down A10 is its £389 entry-level offering. A slimline design standing just over 7cm tall, it still offers a moving magnet phono input, four line-ins, tone controls with a bypass function and two sets of speaker outputs. For more details see rotel.com

Onkyo A-9010 (UK)

Finally, an absolute bargain buy, and from



the same stable as the Pioneer: the £229 Onkyo A-9010 (UK) is a classic example of an existing design modified for the UK market, in this case by removing some features and upgrading audio-critical components. The result is a 44Wpc amp using Onkyo's Wide Range Amplifier Technology, and with a moving magnet phono input, four line-ins and a separate headphone amplifier. It also has bypassable tone controls, and a lovely rich yet detailed sound. See uk.onkyo.com for more information.

● REVIEW

Quad ERA-1

A new pair of headphones from Quad – surprisingly, the company's first venture into this market sector

The main surprise, of course, is that it's taken Quad this long to come up with a pair of headphones.

After all, the company already has a dedicated DAC/headphone amplifier, the £1200 valve-powered PA-One, on its books – and rather fine it is, too.

Anyway, the first Quad headphones are with us, and the ERA-1 sells for just shy of £600, which places it firmly into the luxury sector, but is actually very sensible pricing when you look at the design, construction and *modus operandi*.

The ERA-1 is a planar magnetic design, using a technology dating back at least to Yamaha's work in the 1970s – with what it then called 'orthodynamic' headphones – but currently enjoying something of a revival. Rather than the dynamic drivers found in most speakers, which are miniature variations on the moving coil 'cone and motor' technology found in loudspeaker drive units, planar magnetic drivers use a charged diaphragm mounted between two static magnetic plates: by varying the charge through the 'tracks' on the diaphragm with the signal being fed into the driver, it can be made to move relative to the magnets, thus producing sound.

Benefits? Well, the whole diaphragm moves as one, unlike a cone driven from the centre, and it can be made ultra-light and thus more responsive. That ensures all frequencies arrive at the ear in phase, as they do in nature, without the shifts possible when a cone moves, due to flexing in the cone and thus parts moving at different speeds – in other words, cone break-up.

The downside is that a very strong magnetic field is needed to get the diaphragm to do its stuff without needing huge amounts of power, which tends to make the magnets used quite chunky. That can increase the weight of the headphones, and yes, planar magnetics do have a reputation for being a bit harder to drive than some conventional designs.

The planar magnetic is seen as a good halfway house between the variations on moving coil technology accounting for the majority of the market and the ultra high-end electrostatic headphones out there. Planar magnetic technology brings a lot of the benefits of electrostatic headphones,

including light, fast diaphragms, but without the need for the dedicated high-power electronics electrostats need to drive them.

The planar magnetic driver in the Quad ERA-1 is an in-house development. The magnetic system is designed to maximise sensitivity, and the suspension to suppress non-linear vibrations for an accurate piston motion, which after all is the aim for any driver. An open-back design, like all planar magnetics, the ERA-1 has a metal cavity behind the driver designed to provide an optimal acoustic effect.

In addition, the driver is designed for high sensitivity and low impedance, which Quad says makes them as suitable for use with portable players as they are with high-end mains-powered headphone amps.

The headphones come with two sets of ear-cushions – one trimmed in leather, the other in a soft fleece over latex – offering users a choice to suit personal comfort and also a degree of sonic tuning, and the supplied cloth-covered cable is a generous 215cm long, terminated with separate plugs for each earpiece and a 3.5mm stereo plug, with a 6.3mm adapter supplied. A rather large fitted carrying case is also part of the package, as the headphones don't fold for transportation.

PERFORMANCE

I didn't have the matching PA-One headphone amp for this review, but there were alternatives to hand, so I used everything from the output of my iPhone 8 Plus via the Apple adapter to the little Shanling M0 player, Chord's Mojo/Poly combination and the decidedly high-end iFi Audio Pro iDSD. What quickly became clear was that the Quad headphones don't need a huge amount of power to sound good, but that they also responded as the amplification with which they were used was improved.

They performed well on the end of the tiny Shanling player, even if these possibly aren't the headphones you'd want to take travelling with you, not least due to their size, the somewhat bulky case and the long cable. Playing a range of music all the way up to DSD the openness and effortless nature of the Quad headphones was notable, and they sounded convincing



QUAD ERA-1

Type Headphones

Price £599.95

Drivers Planar magnetic

Sensitivity 94dB/mW

Impedance 20ohms

Weight (with cable) 420g

Accessories supplied 2.15mm cable, 6.3mm adapter, two pairs of ear-cushions (leather/fleece fabric), case

quad-hifi.co.uk

with the LSO/Davis recording of Sibelius Symphonies Nos 3 and 7 in 96kHz/24bit on LSO Live, with an excellent sense of space and impact, and fine detail, on the end of the Chord portable DAC/amp.

With the factory-fresh review set I initially encountered some mechanical creaks when moving my head, but after a little use, some working of the tilts and pivots of the headband, and fine adjustment to get the best fit that was soon gone, and it's also worth noting that there's no mechanical noise transmission from the cable, not least due to its soft cloth jacket.

But it was with the iFi DAC amp, which is admittedly in the region of £2500, that the Quad headphones really shone, showing just what they could do with the minutiae of a recording while still delivering a sound as rich, bold and 'out of the head' as one could wish. With Jonathan Freeman-Attwood's sparkling 'An English Sett for Trumpet' recital (on Linn Records), the sound of the solo instrument simply hung in space in a most attractive manner, while even when working hard with some Wagner at 'exciting' levels the Quad headphones kept their composure, and maintained their clarity.

Simply, these are headphones worth auditioning if you are considering a purchase at this luxury level: their bulk means they may not quite be the 'use with anything, anywhere' solution their maker suggests, but for home listening they have much to commend them. **G**

● ESSAY

‘Very simple. Enjoyable music. That’s it.’

As the embodiment of Marantz’s ‘Because Music Matters’ mantra, Ken Ishiwata is taking (just a little) time to celebrate 40 years with the company

As a statement of how products should sound, the response of Marantz Brand Ambassador Ken Ishiwata, asked recently to describe the acoustic signature of a range on which he’s been working for four decades, couldn’t be much more direct: ‘Very simple,’ he said. ‘Enjoyable music. That’s it.’

Like the slogan adorning Marantz advertising for many years – ‘Because music matters’ – it seems so basic as to be entirely obvious, until you realise that it isn’t an artfully coined slogan at all. Instead, it’s the central tenet of everything the company does, from some of its more exuberant projects of recent years – remember the slightly strange Consolette system of some five or six years ago, with its large speaker housing sitting atop a small electronics housing, and backed with a high-quality wood finish hardly anyone would ever see? – through to mainstream high-end developments culminating in the recent SA-10/PM-10 flagship player and amplifier.

It just goes to show that Marantz can be playful, can stick its neck out occasionally: after all, the Consolette system takes its name from one of the company’s original products of more than half a century ago. And then again, it can take a leap of imagination down an entirely technical path, as is the case with its harnessing of its team’s experience in SACD playback, and all the way back to the development of Bitstream conversion in the days when Philips still made hi-fi (and owned Marantz), in order to create the ‘DAC that isn’t really a DAC’ at the heart of the SA-10 player.

The history of Ishiwata’s tenure with Marantz, now being celebrated with a limited edition ‘KI-Ruby’ SACD/CD player and amplifier, has been recounted many times, from his early experiences with Marantz designs as a child in Japan to the ‘passing of the flame’ by founder Saul B Marantz, back in the early days of CD – ‘He said, “I have done as much as I can with mono and stereo LPs; now it’s your turn to do something with Compact Disc.”’

Also familiar is the way Ishiwata has shaped both the brand and its products since joining the company in 1977, from



The limited edition ‘KI-Ruby’ SACD/CD player and amplifier

finding a way to sell CD players then viewed (erroneously) as outmoded by tuning them and selling them as ‘special edition’ models, through developing the UK-tuned players and amps destined to become the KI Signature range, and travelling extensively to promote the brand and develop new markets. That last part was a major factor in the creation of that ‘Brand Ambassador’ title, and involved everything from long tours to the sponsorship of orchestral concerts on prime-time Chinese TV.

While Ishiwata may often be the public face of what Marantz is doing, he’s always keen to acknowledge the contribution not only of his current team, but of the people with whom he’s worked over the past four decades. And while one can safely say he doesn’t suffer fools gladly, and is pretty demanding when it comes to everything from the way the products are built to the set-up used to demonstrate them, it’s clear that all he really wants is to realise the maximum potential from the designs, and to present music to his audience – be that at a show or in their homes – the way he wants it to be heard.

He told a recent interviewer: ‘Every month, I listen to somewhere around 100 new albums, trying to find something I’m able to use for demonstration, which is very difficult! I have to really keep listening to everything that comes out. But unfortunately, I scrap the majority because of the quality.’

Asked why he didn’t play some of his favourites – oh, alright then, Adele and Lady Gaga – at the demonstration the interviewer attended, he joked that ‘I have to be very careful about who I’m demonstrating to. It all depends. The majority of them were audiophiles. You know how audiophiles are ...’


So, to the KI-Ruby products themselves: produced in a limited edition of 1000 units apiece (500 in black, 500 in silver-gold), the SA-KI Ruby SACD/CD player and PM-KI

Ruby amplifier aren’t tuned versions of standard Marantz models, as has usually been the case with the ‘KI Signature’ line, but ground-up designs, owing more to the flagship SA-10/PM-10 than anything else

in the Marantz range. Selling for £3500 each for player and amp, and adorned with a laser-cut Ishiwata signature and ‘Ruby’ motif atop their thick aluminium casework, they house a host of the company’s latest design thinking, and no shortage of in-house technology.

For example, the player uses a custom-made ‘pure audio’ disc transport mechanism, the SACDM-3, in an age when most players now use versions of computer/video player DVD-ROM drives. And the digital signal from either the drive or the digital inputs provided is passed through what’s called the Marantz Musical Mastering process, launched in the SA-10, which involves upsampling it to DSD11.2Mhz, thus enabling the output to the analogue sockets to be handled by not much more than a simple low-pass digital filter.

The same goes for the amplifier, which uses a hi-res preamp and a switching power amp section, which is basically one half of the bridged amplification used in the PM-10. But in a very Ishiwata twist the phono stage isn’t just an add-on thrown in to acknowledge the current fashionability of vinyl playback; instead it’s a newly developed Marantz Musical Phono EQ section, combining active and passive working for very low-noise operation, thus preserving the fine detail of the very low level signals produced by phono cartridges.

But then even when he was working hard on CD players, then SACD players, and then ways of making the most of downloaded DSD files, Ishiwata never stopped playing LPs – and 12in singles! A heavily modified Marantz TT-1000 has long been a part of his demonstration rig, at one point sporting a very hefty ‘record clamp’ – actually the toroidal transformer from an amplifier. Once, a long time ago, I asked him why he was still playing LPs, when it seemed everything had gone digital. His answer was another simple one: ‘Listen to this ...’ 

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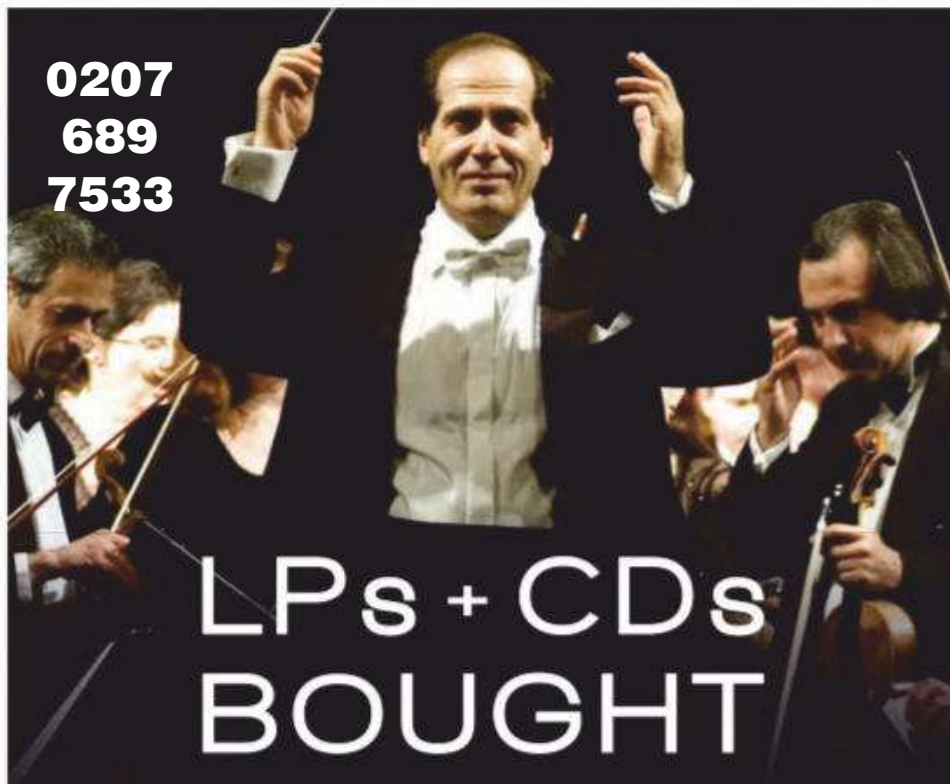


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NOTES & LETTERS

Kapell's Pictures at an Exhibition • Swan Lake: concert vs ballet version • Bach after the war

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William Kapell's Mussorgsky

I read with interest Jed Distler's fine overview of William Kapell (Icons, September, page 78), but feel compelled to correct one minor error. Neither Kapell nor Horowitz engaged in a 'radical rewriting' of Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* in the cascading octave passage in the 'Great Gate' movement. Rather, both of them played the great composer's original thoughts in that spot. Mussorgsky later pasted over this passage with a revised version, reflected in the published version that 99 per cent of pianists now perform.

There are three extant recordings of Kapell's traversal of *Pictures*, all of which are live performances. These were captured in October of 1951, and in March and July of 1953 (the latter from Kapell's tour to Australia just before his tragic death returning from that trip). In the 1951 performance, the pianist plays Mussorgsky's final version of this passage, but sometime between then and early 1953, he must have heard Horowitz's recording and decided in favour of his colleague's choice for this exciting octave passage. Interestingly, Mussorgsky's autograph of *Pictures* shows that he also rewrote portions of 'Gnomus' and 'Baba-Yaga', and a few pianists, including Horowitz, have also reverted to the original version of the latter movement.
David DeBoor Canfield
Bloomington, IN, USA

Jed Distler writes: Mr Canfield is a multi-faceted composer, author and record dealer whose work I know and respect. I thank him for his welcome clarification of significant textual details of which I was previously unaware.

In praise of Stanley Hummel

In the review of 'Landmarks of Recorded Pianism, Vol 1' (August, page 71), I was intrigued and gratified to find that this collection includes a performance by Stanley Hummel.

I doubt that many of your readers are familiar with the name of this artist. Hummel (1908–2005) was an American pianist who lived most of his life in a suburb of Albany, New York. He was also my piano teacher when I was a teenager over half a century ago, and he was a

Letter of the Month

Ruth Gipps, life-changer

I'm delighted to see the Ruth Gipps CD reviewed so positively in the October *Gramophone* (page 39). In the mid-1950s Ruth gave a series of adult education classes that I went to and got to know her well. As a teenager I had been a Prom season-ticket holder, regular reader of *Gramophone*, and active member of the Lambeth record library. In short I was a classical music nerd. Ruth soon got to know of my relative omniscience but instead of congratulating me tore me off a strip saying 'if you know that much and are that keen, what the hell are you doing wasting your time working in a city insurance office? Get yourself some training and do something in music!' So I did, and enjoyed a long and successful career in music education. For me Ruth



Ruth Gipps: inspiring a career in music

was a life-changer. I'm ever grateful to her and I'm sure I'm far from the only one to have such a story to tell.

Geoffrey Kinder
Wivenhoe, Essex

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wonderfully kind and patient man. Very tall and slender, with long, bony fingers, he fit the stereotype of a virtuoso pianist, which he was. A Juilliard graduate and a student of Josef Lhévinne, Hummel performed at Carnegie Hall, Tanglewood and other well-known venues and made some recordings on his own Ersta label (the name is an acronym derived from his name and the name of his brother, Earle, a violinist), but he was ignored by the major labels and never achieved widespread fame, despite his excellence. Perhaps it would have been different today, given the proliferation of labels now on the market.

Daniel Morrison
Congers, NY, USA

Jurowski's 'unique' Swan Lake

I'm writing regarding the article on Vladimir Jurowski's new recording of *Swan Lake* (Musician and the Score, October, page 50). As any seasoned collector of music with an interest in Tchaikovsky knows, the score is mainly recorded complete in the original order

as Tchaikovsky originally conceived it. The performances of the revised (and definitely corrupt) score are usually confined to performances in the theatre. Indeed the recordings referred to in the article, (Rozhdestvensky and Svetlanov) are exactly the music as it seems Jurowski has recorded himself; in fact, Rozhdestvensky includes an additional *pas de deux* apparently not on the new recording.

The only well-known recordings of the corrupt score (there may be others) are by Ansermet and Gergiev.

This recording, therefore, seems no different from those by Svetlanov, Rozhdestvensky, Sawallisch, Previn. Lanchbery and many others, apart from a different ending to one number referred to halfway through the article.

Derek Baker, via email

Sarah Kirkup writes: At no point during the interview did Jurowski say his version was different from other conductors on record – in fact, as he told me, 'I'm not saying we've done anything particularly

NEXT MONTH DECEMBER 2018



The rise of Rossini

As we commemorate 150 years since the composer's death, Richard Osborne reflects on the resurgence of interest in Rossini's music over the past 50 years, and how this has resulted in numerous fine recordings. Plus, in this month's Collection, the same author takes us into the sparkling sound world of *La Cenerentola* and chooses his top recordings

Reshaping Debussy

François-Xavier Roth tells Mark Pullinger about his new recording project with Les Siècles, which celebrates the transformative effect of Debussy's music

Critics' Choice

We ask our critics to name their standout recording from 2018

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new, we're just trying to do it with a more modern approach'. He went on to explain how Tchaikovsky had suffered under the Soviet tradition, which treated him as a precursor to Shostakovich by applying a muscular, almost leaden sound to his music. Jurowski's conscious attempt, in this new recording, was 'to combine a Shostakovichian/20th-century reading with a more middle-European, 19th-century, chamber-music' approach'.

Bach from first principles

Nicholas Kenyon's article (October, page 15) set me wondering. Growing up after the war, I remember the Bach LPs of the '50s, and, curious again about them in the past few years, have found that many of the prominent performers, Karl Münchinger the first to come to mind, had come home from the war and POW imprisonment and simply started performing Bach from what must have seemed to them first principles. There is a huge chunk of history which is not part of our shared experience, but we shouldn't pass it by.

Meanwhile, my own listening experience was rather different – a French master at my school introduced me in the early '50s to the *Brandenburg Concertos* via No 5 (with the joyous Cortot-Thibaud-Cortot trio), thereby freeing me from excessive respect for authoritarian authenticity even when I fell for Wanda Landowska's *Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue*. Even the part-time timpanist and full-time London Underground electrical engineer at Belsize Park who introduced me to Karl Richter's marvellous chorus in *Phoebus and Pan* told me that at his RCM interview he

was asked which work he had ambitions to conduct. When he admitted modestly that he would rather like to have a go at the *St Matthew Passion*, his horrified interviewer said: 'We don't do that sort of thing here.'

When and how did UK audiences and performers eventually get inside what had been happening with Bach performance after the war?

Jim Brennan, via email

More SACDs please

With so many wonderful recordings appearing on SACD, it makes me long for some enterprising company to issue some of the great recordings in their full splendour on the medium. We read the LP enthusiasts raving about how superior that medium is, but for many of us older music lovers, vinyl means several things, the worst of which was surface noise. Listening to Delius waiting for the next click or plop was a great distraction. How much better to hear those recordings in their full beauty without distraction.

There are so many recordings which I would like to hear on SACD. Beecham's *Scheherazade*, and his *Peer Gynt* being two. The 1966 recording of *The Planets* with Boult, as well as his many Elgar stereo issues. I am sure that others will have their own wish list. Of course, the price could be the factor. But if Chandos can release SACD at the same price as standard discs, why not others? EMI started a series of SACD and then dropped them quietly. The Japanese are fortunate in having many classic recordings on SACD, why not us?

Cliff Millward

Tipton, West Midlands

OBITUARIES

Author and scholar who devoted a life to Janáček

JOHN TYRRELL

Editor, author, academic

Born August 17, 1942

Died October 4, 2018



John Tyrrell did more than any other scholar to bring the music of Janáček to a wide audience. He worked closely with Sir Charles Mackerras on the series of great opera recordings on Decca, which won a slew of awards including *Gramophone's* Recording of the Year in 1977 (*Katya Kabanova*) and 1980 (*From the House of the Dead*). With Mackerras

he produced a new critical edition of *Jenůfa* published by Universal Edition. His many books on Janáček culminated with the magisterial two-volume biography (2006-07), one of the great composer biographies in English. He was also the Executive Editor of the revised edition of *The New Grove* (2001).

Born in Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia (now Harare, Zimbabwe), Tyrrell took a PhD at Oxford University before working at *The Musical Times* and *The New Grove* in the 1970s. He taught for many years at the University of Nottingham, and later at the University of Cardiff. A large number of students and colleagues owe a great deal to his humble generosity.

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Meltzer Songs & Structures. *Appleby/Katyukova/Avalon Qt/ Cuckson/McMillen.* ⑆ **BRIDGE9513**
Sierra, A Butterflies Remember a Mountain. *Benedetti/ Elschenbroich/Grynyuk.* ⑆ **BRIDGE9506**
Various Cpsrs Garlands for Steven Stucky – Pf Wks. *Cheng.* ⑆ **BRIDGE9509**

BR-KLASSIK *br-online.de*
Mozart Mass in C minor, K427. *Sols incl Landshamer & Vondung/Bavarian Rad Chor/AAM Berlin/Arman.* ④ ② **900917**
Stravinsky Rite of Spring. Firebird (pp2009/16). *Bavarian RSO/ Jansons.* ⑆ **900168**

CANTALOUPE *cantaloupemusic.com*
Lang, D Mystery Sonatas. *Hadelich.* ⑆ **CA21142**

CANTERBURY VOICES
Various Cpsrs Christmas Wks. *Canterbury Girls' & Ladies' Chs/ Mitchell/Pearson.* ⑆ **CV002**

CAPRICCIO *capriccio.at*
Doppler, F & C Cpte Fl Wks, Vol 9. *Arimany/Córdoba SO/ Moraleda.* ⑆ **C5303**
Schreker Orch Wks. *Deutsche Staatsphilh, Rheinland-Pfalz/ Ward.* ⑆ **C5348**
Various Cpsrs Tpt Collection. *Friedrich.* ⑤ ⑩ ② **C7285**

CAPRICE *musikverket.se/capricerecords*
Öberg Hillevi. *Ahlberg Ek.* ⑆ **CAP21919**
Various Cpsrs Music from Greece. *Samiau.* ⑆ **CAP21835**

C-AVI MUSIC *avi-music.de*
Juon. Tchaikovsky Pf Trios. *Boulanger Trio.* ⑆ **AVI8553401**
Mahler Sym No 3. *Larsson/Düsseldorf SO/Fischer, A.* ⑆ ② **AVI8553399**

CEDILLE *cedillerecords.org*
Saariaho Chbr Wks. *Hodges/Karttunen/Curtis 20/21 Ens/ Covington.* ⑆ **CDR90000 183**

CENTAUR *centaurrecords.com*
Bruch. Massenet. Mendelssohn Vn Concs. *Augustyn/ Janáček PO/Klecker.* ⑆ **CRC3585**
Various Cpsrs Much Ado About Nothing. *Amernet Qt.* ⑆ **CRC3499**

CHAMPS HILL *champsillrecords.co.uk*
Hoad Magic Lantern Tales – Songs. *Various artists.* ⑆ **CHRC146**

CHANDOS *chandos.net*
Copland Orch Wks, Vol 4. *BBC PO/Wilson.* ⑆ ② **CHSA5222**
Elgar Music Makers. Spirit of England. *Connolly/Staples/ BBC SO/Davis, A.* ⑆ ② **CHSA5215**
Mozart Pf Concs, Vol 3. *Bavouzet/Manchester Camerata/ Takács-Nagy.* ⑆ **CHAN20035**
Mussorgsky Pictures at an Exhibition **Tchaikovsky** Seasons. *Douglas.* ⑆ **CHAN10991**
Scriabin Pf Conc **Tchaikovsky** Pf Concs Nos 1 & 3. *Wang, X/ RSNO/Oundjian.* ⑆ ② **CHSA5216**
Various Cpsrs Revive – Baroque Arrs. *Ferio Sax Qt.* ⑆ **CHAN10999**

CLAUDIO *claudiorecords.com*
Various Cpsrs British Gtr Wks. *Keeping.* ⑆ **CC4628-2**

CONTINUO CLASSICS *continuoclassics.vpweb.fr*
Bach, JS. Reger. Ysaÿe Inspirations – Solo Vn Wks. *Louis.* ⑆ **CC777 808**
Various Cpsrs French & Russian Wks for Hps. *Sodikova/Perrin.* ⑆ **CC777 730**

CORO *the-sixteen.org.uk*
Haydn Syms Nos 49 & 87 **Mozart** Sinf conc, K364. *Handel & Haydn Society/Christophers.* ⑆ **COR16168**
Various Cpsrs Star of Heaven: The Eton Choirbook Legacy. *Sixteen/Christophers.* ⑆ **COR16166**

CPO *jpc.de/jpcng/cpo/home*
Bach, JS Brandenburg Concs. *Conc Copenhagen/Mortensen.* ⑆ ② ② **CPO555 158-2**
Dubois Vn Conc. Vn Son. Ballad. *Turban/Kuen/Deutsche Rad Philh, Saarbrücken Kaiserslautern/Grüneis.* ⑆ **CPO777 932-2**
Fasch Sacred Wks. *Sols/Rheinische Kantorei/Kleine Konzert/ Max.* ⑆ **CPO555 176-2**
Goldmark Sym Poems, Vol 1. *Bamberg SO/Bollon.* ⑆ **CPO555 160-2**

Kálmán Kaiserin Josephine. *Sols/Franz Lehár Orch/Burkert.* ⑆ ② **CPO555 136-2**
Kuula Wks for Vn & Pf. *Karmon/Triendl.* ⑆ **CPO555 148-2**
Strauss, R Pf Trio. Pf Qt. *Blumenthal/Dinglinger/Nys/Vay.* ⑆ **CPO555 116-2**
Telemann Christmas Oratorios. *Sols/Cologne Academy/Willens.* ⑆ **CPO555 254-2**

CRYSTAL RECORDS *crystalrecords.com*
Various Cpsrs Wks for Brass Qnt (r1967). *Los Angeles Brass Qnt.* ⑆ ② **CD102**

Various Cpsrs Wks With Brass Qnt. *Los Angeles Brass Qnt/ Kraft/Chaloupka/Davis.* ⑆ **CD109**

DABRINGHAUS UND GRIMM *mdg.de*
Buxtehude Early Org Wks. *Vogel/Fritzschn.* ⑆ **MDG314 2092-2**
Rossini Cpte Solo Pf Wks. *Irmer.* ⑤ ⑧ **MDG618 2098-2**
Tchaikovsky Stg Qt No 1. Souvenir de Florence. *Meccore Qt/ Charisius/Erben.* ⑆ ② **MDG903 2091-6**
Weisse Cl Qnt. Cl Son. *Berolina Ens.* ⑆ ② **MDG948 2078-6**

DACAPO *dacapo-records.dk*
Bach, JS/Navarro-Alonso Goldberg Vars. *Alpha Ens.* ⑆ **8 226210**
Worsaae Wesenheit ab Wesenheit. *Asmussen/Figura Ens.* ⑆ **8 226140**

DANACORD *danacord.dk*
Fonseca Cpte Wks. *Hansen/Penderup.* ⑆ **DACOC1777**
Various Cpsrs American Landscapes – Pf Wks. *Licad.* ⑆ **DACOC1800**

DB PRODUCTIONS *db-productions.se*
Maier Wks, Vol 3. *Zilliacus/Raitinen/Forsberg/Kretz/Persson.* ⑆ **DBCD188**

DIVINE ART *divine-art.co.uk*
Couperin, F. Rameau. Seixas Pf Wks. *Terashi.* ⑆ **ATH23207**
Petridu Mystery of Christmas. *Harper/Rogers/Smart/Down.* ⑆ **DDA25186**

DIVOX *divox.com*
Haydn Stg Qts, Op 50. *Amati Qt.* ⑆ ② **CDX21801**

DOREMI *doremi.com*
Bach, JS Pf Concs (pp1975). *Nikolayeva/Lithuanian CO/ Sondeckis.* ④ ③ **DHR8056/8**
Bach Solo Pf Wks (r c1970). Pf Concs (r c1972). *Devetzi/ Moscow CO/Barshai.* ⑆ ② **DHR8063/4**
Various Cpsrs Vn Wks (r1956-63). *Markov.* ⑆ ② ② **DHR8067/8**
Various Cpsrs Wks for Two Gtrs (pp1962-63). *Presti/Lagoya.* ⑆ **DHR8059**

DYNAMIC *dynamic.it*
Clementi Pf Sons. *Clementi.* ⑆ **CDS7827**
Donizetti Messa di Requiem (pp2017). *Sols/Donizetti Op Chor & Orch/Rovaris.* ⑆ **CDS7813**
Liszt Paganini Études, S140. *Tomellini.* ⑆ **CDS7815**

ECM NEW SERIES *ecmrecords.com*
Widmann Arche. *Hamburg St PO/Nagano.* ⑆ **481 7007**

ELOQUENCE
Adam Corsaire (r1990). *ECO/Bonyng.* ② ② ② **ELQ482 8605**
Adam Diable à quatre. Ovs (r1964/69/96). *Bonyng.* ⑆ ② ② **ELQ482 8603**
Beethoven Choral Fantasia **Mozart** Pf Concs (r1954-63). *Foldes/ BPO.* ② ② ② **ELQ482 8533**
Glinka Ivan Susanin (r1955). *Belgrade Nat Op/Danon.* ② ③ ② **ELQ482 6924**

Handel Semele (r1956). *Sols incl Vyvyan & Watts/New SO of London/Lewis.* ② ② ② **ELQ482 5055**
Various Cpsrs Sinfonia. *Bonyng/Hickox/Hurwitz.* ② ② ② **ELQ482 8794**

ETCETERA *etcetera-records.com*
Berger Pf Wks. *Surawatari.* ⑆ **KTC1599**
Schubert Works for Four Hands, Vol 5. *Vermeulen/Peeters.* ⑆ **KTC1505**

Spaan Inland. *Urruchi/Van Eck/Zwaanenburg/Fulkerso.* ⑆ **KTC1580**

Various Cpsrs Capriccio: Gems from the Quartet Literature. *Enaccord Qt.* ⑆ **KTC1608**
Various Cpsrs Michelangelo's Madrigal – Wks for Sop & Lute. *Macoboy/Meunier.* ⑆ **KTC1623**
Various Cpsrs Song of Songs. *Cappella Mariana/Semerad.* ⑆ **KTC1602**

FIRST HAND *firsthandrecords.com*
Brahms. Saint-Saëns. Strauss, R Early Stereo Recs (r1954). *LSO/ Del Mar/Goehr, W/Philh Orch/Menges.* ⑆ ② **FHR058**

GENUIN *genuin.de*
Chopin. Liszt Summit Pf Wks. *Mukumi.* ⑆ **GEN18626**
Schubert Pf Son No 20 **Schumann** Humoreske. *Ehwald.* ⑆ **GEN18620**

Various Cpsrs Ode an die Rhapsodie – Wks for Cl & Pf. *Duo Kermani-Gentili.* ⑆ **GEN18625**
Various Cpsrs Strandgut. *Ens LUX:NM.* ⑆ **GEN18628**

GRAMOLA *gramola.at*
Schubert Wks for Pf Four Hands (r1978/2007). *Badura-Skoda/ Demus.* ④ ② **99175**

GRAND PIANO
Kuhlau Pf Wks. *Lühr.* ⑆ **GP797**
Széchenyi family Pf Wks from a Hungarian Dynasty, 1800-1920. *Kassai/Lázár.* ⑆ **GP786**
Various Cpsrs Century of Polish Pf Miniatures. *Szałucka.* ⑆ **GP793**

GUILD *guildmusic.com*
Bernstein Scenes from West Side Story (r1988). *Nettle/ Markham.* ⑆ **GMCD7811**
Various Cpsrs Have Yourself a Merry Cello Christmas. *Kreger.* ⑆ **GMCD7812**

HALLÉ *halle.co.uk*
Elgar Wand of Youth. Orch Wks. *Hallé Orch/Elder.* ⑆ **CDHLL7548**

HÄNSSLER CLASSIC	<i>haenssler-classic.de</i>
Debussy Préludes. <i>Kohn.</i>	ⓕ ② HC18085
Schumann Second Edns of Early Wks, Vol 1. <i>Uhlig.</i>	ⓕ HC17038
HARMONIA MUNDI	<i>harmoniamundi.com</i>
Bouteiller. Brossard Maîtres du motet. <i>Arts Florissants/Agnew.</i>	ⓕ HAF890 5300
Debussy Orch Wks. <i>Siècles/Roth.</i>	ⓕ HMM90 5291
Haydn Concerti per Esterházy. <i>Gli Incogniti/Beyer.</i>	ⓕ HMM90 2314
Mahler Sym No 5. <i>Swedish RSO/Harding.</i>	ⓕ HMM90 2366
Mozart Vn Sons, Vol 1. <i>Faust/Melnikov.</i>	ⓕ HMM90 2360
Various Cpsrs À Portuguesa – Iberian Concs & Sons. <i>Staier/Casa da Música Baroque Orch, Porto.</i>	ⓕ HMM90 2337
Various Cpsrs Mr Forqueraý’s Favourites. <i>Boulanger/Gallon/Gautrot/Falik.</i>	ⓕ HMM90 2330
Various Cpsrs Mystery of Christmas. <i>ORA Sgrs/Digby.</i>	ⓕ HMM90 5305

HELICON
Schoenberg Gurrelieder. Verklärte Nacht. <i>Israel PO/Mehta.</i>
ⓕ ② HELO29658

HORTUS	<i>editionshortus.com</i>
Various Cpsrs Org Wks. <i>Bucher.</i>	ⓕ HORTUS149
Various Cpsrs À nos morts ignorés – Songs for Bar & Pf. <i>Mauillon/Le Bozec.</i>	ⓕ HORTUS715
Various Cpsrs Clairières dans le ciel – Songs for Ten & Pf. <i>Duo Contraste.</i>	ⓕ HORTUS713
Various Cpsrs Intimate Thoughts – Wks for Vn & Pf. <i>Sutre/Vanhauwert.</i>	ⓕ HORTUS712
Various Cpsrs Sérénade. <i>Calidore Qt.</i>	ⓕ HORTUS714
Various Cpsrs Song of War. <i>Ens Double Expression/Pélaprat.</i>	ⓕ HORTUS711

ICA CLASSICS	<i>icartists.co.uk</i>
Beethoven Pf Concs Nos 4 & 5 (pp1956/52). <i>Casadesus/RPO/Beecham/BBC SO/Sargent.</i>	ⓕ ④ ICAC5154
Mozart Vn Concs (bp1956). <i>Menuhin.</i>	Ⓜ ② ④ ICAC5153

KAIROS	<i>kairos-music.com</i>
Graugaard Engage & Share. <i>Grup Instrumental de Valencia/Cerveró.</i>	ⓕ 0015039KAI
Saunders Smith New England. <i>Thurner.</i>	ⓕ 0015053KAI

LAWO	<i>lawo.no</i>
Sibelius Sym No 1. Prometheus. <i>Gerstein/Oslo PO/Petrenko.</i>	ⓕ LWC1160

LYRITA	<i>lyrita.co.uk</i>
Goossens Apocalypse (bp1982). <i>Sols/Sydney SO/Fredman.</i>	ⓕ SRCD371

Musgrave Phoenix Rising. <i>BBC NOW/Boughton.</i>	ⓕ SRCD372
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MELODIYA	<i>melody.su</i>
Butsko Selected Wks. <i>Various artists.</i>	Ⓜ ② MELCD100 2556
Various Cpsrs Belle époque – Wks for Two Pfs. <i>Berlinskaya/Ancelle.</i>	ⓕ MELCD100 2563

MPR	<i>mikepurtonrecording.com</i>
Cooke Cpte Vn Sons. <i>Pleyel Ens.</i>	ⓕ MPR103
Salzedo Stg Qts Nos 1, 5 & 10. <i>Archaeus Qt.</i>	ⓕ MPR104

MSR CLASSICS	<i>msrcd.com</i>
Various Cpsrs Canyon Songs. <i>Lundy/Chamberlain, E & R/Toy.</i>	ⓕ MS1684
Various Cpsrs Pf Humoresques. <i>Rabotkina.</i>	ⓕ MS1662
Various Cpsrs Russian Tpt Sons. <i>Akhmadullin/Bolshakova.</i>	ⓕ MS1697
Various Cpsrs Vn Sons. <i>Auerbach/Pierce.</i>	ⓕ MS1618

NAXOS	<i>naxos.com</i>
Castelnuovo-Tedesco Wks for Vn & Pf. Chbr Wks. <i>Alogna/Stassi/Trainini/Pascalucci.</i>	Ⓜ 8 574003
Domeniconi Wks for Two Gtrs. <i>Amadeus Gtr Duo.</i>	Ⓜ 8 573977
Górecki Stg Qts Nos 1 & 2. <i>Tippett Qt.</i>	Ⓜ 8 573919
Jiménez Solo Pf Wks. Wks for Vc & Pf. <i>Villafañe/De Marinis.</i>	Ⓜ 8 579040

Lully. Marais. Muffat Versailles Revolution. <i>Indianapolis Baroque Orch/Kuijken, B.</i>	Ⓜ 8 573868
Rihm Lichtzwang. <i>Yang/Deutsche Staatsphilh, Rheinland-Pfalz/Mueller.</i>	Ⓜ 8 573812
Rossini Maometto II. <i>Sols/Virtuosi Brunensis/Fogliani.</i>	ⓑ ③ 8 660444/6
Rossini Péchés de vieillesse, Vol 11. <i>Marangoni.</i>	Ⓜ 8 573964
Satie Pf Wks. <i>Hao.</i>	Ⓜ 8 573796
Wagner Götterdämmerung. <i>Sols/Hong Kong PO/Zweden.</i>	ⓑ ④ 8 660428/31
Wagner Ring. <i>Sols/Hong Kong PO/Zweden.</i>	Ⓢ ⑭ ④ 8 501403
Wirén Stg Qts Nos 2-5. <i>Wirén Qt.</i>	Ⓜ 8 573588

Various Cpsrs German Christmas. <i>Margaretha Consort/Broekroelofs.</i>	Ⓜ 8 551398
Various Cpsrs Greek Wind Qnts. <i>Aeolos Woodwind Qnt.</i>	Ⓜ 8 579037

Various Cpsrs My Playlist for the Christmas Season. <i>Various artists.</i>	Ⓢ 8 578349
Various Cpsrs My Playlist for the Nativity. <i>Various artists.</i>	Ⓢ 8 578348

NIMBUS	<i>wyastone.co.uk</i>
Various Cpsrs Accord for Life – Accordion Wks. <i>Milivojević.</i>	ⓕ NI6370
Various Cpsrs Recorded Legacy. <i>Merrick.</i>	Ⓢ ⑥ NI8820

OEHMS	<i>oehmsclassics.de</i>
Bach, JS Art of Fugue. <i>Delian Qt.</i>	ⓕ ② OC468
Various Cpsrs Now: Jazz & Renaissance Improvisations. <i>Wolf/Siegmeth.</i>	ⓕ OC1897

ONDINE	<i>ondine.net</i>
Eller Orch Wks. <i>Skride/Estonian Nat SO/Elts.</i>	ⓕ ODE1321-2
Lutoslawski Syms Nos 1 & 4. Jeux vénitiens. <i>Finnish RSO/Lintu.</i>	ⓕ ④ ODE1320-5

Selickis Paradisus vocis. <i>Latvian Rad Ch/Sinfonietta Riga/KJava.</i>	ⓕ ODE1327-2
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OPERA RARA	<i>opera-rara.com</i>
Rossini Semiramide. <i>Sols incl Shagimuratova, Barcellona & Palazzi/Op Rara Ch/OAE/Elder.</i>	ⓕ ④ ORC57

ORANGE MOUNTAIN MUSIC	<i>orangemountainmusic.com</i>
Glass Sym No 11. <i>Bruckner Orch, Linz/Davies, DR.</i>	ⓕ OMM0133

ORCHID	<i>orchidclassics.com</i>
Various Cpsrs Four Elements: Water – Pf Wks. <i>Kosuge.</i>	ⓕ ORC100092
Various Cpsrs Grand Org of Temple Ch. <i>Sayer.</i>	ⓕ ORC100090
Various Cpsrs Vars sérieuses – Pf Wks. <i>Grigoryan.</i>	ⓕ ORC100088

ORFEO	<i>orfeo-international.de</i>
Bizet Carmen (pp1967). <i>Sols incl Bumbry, Vickers & Freni/VPO/Karajan.</i>	Ⓜ ③ C866 183D
Brahms Liebeslieder Waltzes Schumann Spanisches Liederspiel (pp1974). <i>Mathis/Fassbaender/Schilhawsky/Werba.</i>	ⓕ C953 181B
Glazunov. Rimsky-Korsakov. Tchaikovsky Wks for Vc & Orch. <i>Müller-Schott/Deutsches SO Berlin/Shokhakimov.</i>	ⓕ C933 181A

PALADINO	<i>paladino.at</i>
Hesketh Orch Wks. <i>BBC NOW/Mueller.</i>	ⓕ PMR0092
Mendelssohn Wks for Cl, Basset-Hn & Pf. <i>Ashkenazy, D/Furniss/Kolly.</i>	ⓕ PMR0096

PARACLETE	<i>paracletepress.com</i>
Anonymous Discovering Gregorian Chant. <i>Monastic Ch of St Peter’s Abbey, Solesmes.</i>	ⓕ ② GDCD19521
Anonymous Gregorian Chant Anthology. <i>Monastic Ch of St Peter’s Abbey, Solesmes.</i>	ⓕ GDCDS838
Anonymous Gregorian Chant Anthology & Sampler. <i>Monastic Ch of St Peter’s Abbey, Solesmes.</i>	ⓕ ② GDCD9545
Anonymous Gregorian Chant for Passiontide. <i>Monastic Ch of St Peter’s Abbey, Solesmes.</i>	Ⓜ ③ GDCD9552
Anonymous Gregorian Chant Rediscovered. <i>Monastic Ch of St Peter’s Abbey, Solesmes.</i>	ⓕ GDCDS835
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Anonymous Learning About Gregorian Chant. <i>Monastic Ch of St Peter’s Abbey, Solesmes.</i>	ⓕ GDCDS843
Anonymous Vespers & Compline. <i>Monastic Ch of St Peter’s Abbey, Solesmes.</i>	ⓕ GDCDS826
Various Cpsrs Chants of Christmas. <i>Gloriae Dei Cantores.</i>	ⓕ GDCD125

Various Cpsrs Christmas in Brass. <i>Gabriel V Brass Ens/Extol Handbell Ch/Chalmers.</i>	ⓕ GDCD054
Various Cpsrs Keeping Christmas. <i>Gloriae Dei Cantores/Patterson.</i>	ⓕ GDCD50
Various Cpsrs Sing Noel. <i>Gloriae Dei Cantores.</i>	ⓕ GDCD128

PAVANE	<i>primafacie.ascrecords.com</i>
Chopin Preludes. Pf Sons. <i>Hamilton.</i>	ⓕ PFCD084
Various Cpsrs Wandering Pathways – Vars for Rec & Stgs. <i>Turner/Various artists.</i>	ⓕ PFCD091

PRIMA FACIE	<i>primafacie.ascrecords.com</i>
Brahms Pf Conc No 1. <i>Litvintseva/Klassische Philh, Bonn/Beissel.</i>	ⓕ PH18065
Turina Wks for Wind Qnt. <i>Azahar Ens.</i>	ⓕ PH18073

Various Cpsrs Edn. <i>Staatskapelle Dresden/Haitink.</i>	Ⓢ ⑥ PH14002
Various Cpsrs Vc Wks. <i>Navarra.</i>	Ⓢ ⑩ PH18017
Various Cpsrs Vn Concs. Vn Wks. <i>Wicks.</i>	ⓑ ④ PH18095

QUARTZ	<i>quartzmusic.com</i>
Villa-Lobos Cpte Solo Pf Wks, Vols 4 & 5. <i>Bratke.</i>	ⓑ ② QTZ2129

RESONUS	<i>resonusclassics.com</i>
Brown, JF Heavens & the Heart – Chor & Orch Wks. <i>Sols/Ch of Royal Holloway/Orch Nova/Vass.</i>	ⓕ RES10227
Various Cpsrs Cor mélodique. <i>Scott/Devine.</i>	ⓕ RES10228
Various Cpsrs Snow Queens. <i>Juice Voc Ens.</i>	ⓕ RES10224

RONDEAU PRODUCTION	<i>rondeau.de</i>
Bach, JS. Krebs Org Wks. <i>Pohle.</i>	ⓕ ROP6160
Bruckner Mass in F minor. <i>Sols/Mainz Cath Ch & Orch/Storck.</i>	ⓕ ROP6161
Various Cpsrs Dresdner Weihnacht. <i>Various Chs/Grünert.</i>	ⓕ ROP6159

SHEVA COLLECTION	<i>shevacollection.it</i>
Higginson Scenes & Messages. <i>Auchterlonie/Brignall/Hyde/Cioffi/Viale.</i>	ⓕ SH209

SIGNUM	<i>signumrecords.com</i>
Various Cpsrs Advent Live (pp2014-17). <i>Ch of St John’s Coll, Cambridge/Nethsingha.</i>	ⓕ SIGCD535
Various Cpsrs Lest We Forget. <i>Ch of Chichester Cath/Harrison.</i>	ⓕ SIGCD562

SKANI	
Ivanovs Syms for Stgs. <i>Sinfonietta Riga/Šně.</i>	Ⓕ LMIC068



SOLIDEO GLORIA	<i>monteverdi.co.uk/sdg</i>
Monteverdi Ritorno d’Ulisse in patria (pp2017). <i>Sols/Monteverdi Ch/EBS/Gardiner.</i>	Ⓜ ③ SDG730



SOLO MUSICA	
Schubert Syms Nos 5 & 6. <i>Munich SO/Edusei.</i>	ⓕ SM296
Various Cpsrs Dimensionen anders Welt. <i>Petersen/Radicke.</i>	ⓕ SM294

SOMM	<i>somm-recordings.com</i>
Parry English Lyrics, Vol 3. <i>Fox/Williams/West.</i>	ⓕ SOMMCD272
Schubert Pf Wks. <i>McCawley.</i>	ⓕ SOMMCD0188
Various Cpsrs Darkest Midnight: Songs of Winter & Christmas. <i>Papagena.</i>	ⓕ SOMMCD0189


DVD & BLU-RAY



BEL AIR CLASSIQUES



Tchaikovsky Iolanta. Nutcracker (pp2016). *Paris Op Orch/Altinoglu.* (F) ②  **BAC145**; (F)  **BAC445**



Various Cpsrs Great Ballets from the Bolshoi (pp2013-16). *Bolshoi Orch.* (M) ④  **BAC619**; (M) ④  **BAC620**

C MAJOR ENTERTAINMENT

Verdi Ballo in maschera (pp2016). *Sols incl Beczala & Harteros/
Bavarian St Op/Mehta.* (F)  **739507**


Strauss family 50 Years Anniversary Concert. *Vienna Johann
Strauss Orch/Eschwé.* (F)  **747208**; (F)  **747304**


Tchaikovsky John Cranko's Eugene Onegin (pp2017). *Stuttgart
St Orch/Tuggle.* (F)  **801208**; (F)  **801304**

Various Cpsrs Young People's Concerts, Vol 1. *NYPO/Bernstein.*
(M) ⑦  **800208**; (F) ④  **800304**



DELOS	<i>delosmusic.com</i>
Verdi Requiem. <i>Sols/Bolshoi Th Chor/St Petersburg PO/Temirkanov.</i>	ⓕ  DV7012 ; ⓕ  DV7013



ICA CLASSICS	<i>icartists.co.uk</i>
Various Cpsrs At the BBC. <i>Tortelier.</i>	ⓕ  ICAD5155

NAXOS	<i>naxos.com</i>
Berg Wozzeck. <i>Sols incl Maltman & Westbroek/Netherlands PO/Albrecht, M.</i>	ⓕ  2 110582 ; ⓕ  NBD0081V
Haydn Schöpfung. <i>Sols/Accentus/Insula Orch/Equilbey.</i>	ⓕ  2 110581 ; ⓕ  NBD0080V
Wagner Götterdämmerung. <i>Sols/Hong Kong PO/Zweden.</i>	ⓕ  NBD0075A

Various Cpsrs Masterpieces for Sym Band. <i>US Marine Band/Schwarz.</i>	ⓕ  2 110589
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OPUS ARTE

Bernstein Celebration. *Orch of the ROH/Kessels/Wordsworth.*
ⓕ  **OA1276D**; ⓕ  **OABD7252D**

Rossini Barbiere di Siviglia. Cenerentola. *Sols/Glyndebourne
Chor/LPO/Mazzola/Jurowski.*
ⓑ ③  **OA1277BD**; ⓕ ②  **OABD7253D**

H	M	Prokofiev	W Schuman	
Handel	Mahler	Violin Concerto No 1, Op 19 43	Violin Concerto 110	Don Carlo – Signora! Per Vostra
Arminio 96	Des Knaben Wunderhorn – Revelge; Der Tamboursg’sell; Wo die schönen Trompeten blasen 91	Violin Concerto No 2, Op 63 110	C Schumann	Maestà ... Che mai si fa nel suol francese ... Carlo, ch’è sol il nostro amore 101
Haydn	Das Lied von der Erde 85	Visions fugitives, Op 22 (excs) 75	Scherzo No 2, Op 14 70	Rigoletto – Pari siamo ... Figlia! Mio padre! 101
Cello Concerto, No 1 38	Symphony No 3 40	Puccini	R Schumann	Simon Boccanegra – Plebe! Patrizi! Popolo 101
String Quartet, Op 54 No 2 55	Symphony No 5 41	La bohème DVD 97	Fantasie, Op 17 70	La traviata – Pura siccome un angelo 101
Violin Concertos – No 1; No 4 38	Marais	Purcell	Geistervariationen, WoO24 71	Villa-Lobos
Holst	Sonnerie 48	Ground, Z221 48	Humoreske, Op 20 70	Bachianas Brasileiras No 5 – Aria (Cantilena) 91
Indra, Op 13 39	Marini	R	Schütz	Floresta do Amazonas – Canção de amor; Melodia sentimental 91
Invocation, Op 19 No 2 39	Passacaglia a 4 88	Rääts	Erbarm dich mein, o Herre Gott, SWV447 89	Vivaldi
A Moorside Suite 39	Martin	Kaleidoscopic Études, Op 97 53	Von Gott will ich nicht lassen, SWV366 89	Concerto, RV531 – Largo 48
Scherzo 39	Concerto for Seven Wind Instruments 110	Rachmaninov	Scriabin	Wagner
Symphony ‘The Cotswolds’ 39	Études for String Orchestra 110	Étude-tableau, Op 39 No 7 75	Canon 48	Der fliegende Holländer 100
A Winter Idyll 39	In terra pax 110	Fragments (1917) 75	Impromptus – Op 10; Op 12; Op 14 70	Götterdämmerung 100
I	Petite symphonie concertante 110	Piano Concertos – No 2, Op 18; No 4, Op 40 44	Impromptu à la mazur, Op 2 No 3 70	Watkins
Inglot	Violin Concerto 110	Symphonies – cpte 109	Piano Sonata No 2, ‘Sonata-Fantaisie’, Op 19 70	Flute Concerto 47
The leaves bee greene 73	Massenet	Vespers (All-Night Vigil), Op 37 – Nunc dimittis 75	Prometheus: The Poem of Fire, Op 60 47	Symphony 47
Isella	Cendrillon DVD 96	Ramírez	Symphony No 1, Op 26 47	Violin Concerto 47
Canción con todos 87	Medtner	La malagueña 87	LC Smith	Weber
J	Sonata-Ballade, Op 27 75	Ravel	Wanderer 60	Clarinet Quintet, Op 34 57
Jiménez	Mendelssohn	À la manière de Borodine 48	Soto	Weill
Amanecí entre tus brazos 87	Symphonies – cpte 109	Daphnis et Chloé – Suite No 2 82	El tamalito 87	Four Walt Whitman Songs 91
Josquin	Symphony No 3, ‘Scottish’, Op 56 DVD 35	Menuet antique 55	Stephan	Whitley
Missa Gaudeamus 83	Violin Concerto 110	Menuet, Op <i>postb</i> 55	Ich will dir singen ein Hohelied 91	Autumn Songs 61
Missa L’ami Baudichon 83	Méndez	Menuet sur le nom d’Haydn 55	R Strauss	Woolrich
K	Cucurrucucú paloma 87	Piano Concerto in G DVD 49	Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche 110	Ulysses Awakes 61
Korngold	Mili	String Quartet 55	Stravinsky	Z
Violin Concerto, Op 35 48	El yerberito moderno 87	Valses nobles et sentimentales 82	Concertino 55	Zemlinsky
L	C Miller	Reich	The Rake’s Progress – No word from Tom 91	Albumblatt (Erinnerungen aus Wien) 70
Langgaard	O Zomer! 60	Reicha	The Soldier’s Tale 58	
Symphonies – No 2, ‘Awakening of Spring’; No 6, ‘The Heaven- Rending’ 40	Mozart	Études dans le genre fugué, Op 97 – Nos 1-13 69	Three Movements from Petrushka 75	Collections
Unnoticed Morning Stars 40	Clarinet Quintet, K581 57	Fugue, Op 36 No 12 69	T	‘Albion Refracted’ – Piatti Quartet 59
Legrenzi	Symphonies – cpte 109	Ritter	Tchaikovsky	‘American Concertos’ – Baiba Skride 48
Sonata sesta 88	Violin Sonatas – No 21, K304; No 23, K306; No 35, K526 57	O amantissime sponse 89	Eugene Onegin – Vi mnye pisali ... Kogda bi zhizn domashnim krugom 101	‘Bailar Cantando’ – Jordi Savall 88
Liszt	Musgrave	Rossini	The Queen of Spades – Ya vas lyublyu 101	‘Bésame Mucho’ – Juan Diego Flórez 87
An Edlitam, S333 85	Mary, Queen of Scots 97	Il barbiere di Siviglia – All’idea di quel metallo 101	Serenade for Strings, Op 48 38	‘The Complete Columbia Album Collection’ – George Szell 104
Auf dem Wasser zu singen (Schubert), S558 No 2 70	N	Rózsa	Swan Lake, Op 20 47	‘The Complete Decca Recordings’ – Alicia de Larrocha 107
Comment, disaient-ils, S276 85	Nielsen	Violin Concerto, Op 24 48	Symphony No 5 111	‘Four Fantasies’ – Anna Fedorova 70
Du bist wie eine Blume, S287 85	Violin Concerto 43	Rubbra	Violin Concerto 110	‘Himmelsmusik’ – Christina Pluhar 89
Enfant, si j’étais roi, S283 85	P	Symphonies – Nos 2 & 4 111	Tenney	‘Impromptus’ – Katya Apekisheva 70
Fantasia and Fugue on ‘Ad nos, ad salutarem undam’, S259 71	Parabosco	Rzewski	Harmonium 60	‘The Liberation of the Gothic’ – Graindelavoix 89
(arr Busoni) 71	Ricercare XIV, ‘Da pacem’ 88	A Mensch 71	Theile	‘Life’ – Igor Levit 71
Freudvoll und leidvoll, S280 85	Parry	S	Gott, hilf mirb. Der Sionitin Wiegenlied 89	‘The London Recordings’ – Neville Marriner 109
Geheimes Flüstern hier und dort (C Schumann), S569 No 16 70	Symphony No 4 43	Saint-Saëns	Theofanidis	‘Musica Nova’ – Jordi Savall 88
Gestorben war ich, S308 85	Suite moderne – three movements 43	Cello Concerto No 1 110	The Cows of Apollo – Maia’s Aria 91	‘The Passage Mesures’ – Mahan Esfahani 73
Hohe Liebe, S307 85	Proserpine 43	Salieri	Tomkins	‘Requiem: The Pity of War’ – Ian Bostridge 91
Ich hab’ in deinem Auge (C Schumann), S569 No 9 70	Pärt	Les Horaces 99	Barafostus Dreame 73	‘Resurrection’ – 12 Ensemble 61
Isoldens Liebestod (Wagner), S447 71	Mozart-Adagio 53	D Scarlatti	Pavana 73	‘Russian Émigré Composers’ – Alexander Karpeyev 75
Jugendglück, S323 85	Pedro de Araujo	Keyboard Sonatas – Kk6; Kk30; Kk69; Kk119; Kk132; Kk141; Kk162; Kk175; Kk180; Kk199; Kk208; Kk213; Kk216; Kk460; Kk481 69	Tulev	‘A Sesquicentennial Salute’ – Dan Godfrey 111
Die Lorelei, S273 85	Consonancias de 1º tom 88	Scheidt	Flow, my tears 87	‘Songs for Strings’ – Donald Fraser 48
Nuages gris, S199 48	Pedro de San Lorenzo	Allemande XVI 88	I said, Who are You? – He said, You 87	‘There’s a Place for Us’ – Nadine Sierra 91
Oh! quand je dors, S282 85	Folia 88	Courant dolorosa 88	Legatissimo 87	‘Through the Eyes of Yuja’ – Yuja Wang DVD 49
O lieb, so lang du lieben kannst, S298 85	Penderecki	Galliard battaglia XXI 88	Magnificat 87	
S’il est un charmant gazon, S284 85	Duo concertante 43	Paduan V 88	Suvine Vihm (Summer Rain) 87	
Soirée de Vienne, S427 No 6 70	La follia 43	Schleiermacher	Tanto gentile 87	
Solemn March to the Holy Grail from Parsifal (Wagner), S450 71	Violin Concerto No 2, ‘Metamorphosen’ 43	Relief DVD 35	Tunder	
Ständchen (Schubert), S560 No 7 70	Violin Sonata No 2 43	Schubert	Ein kleines Kindelein 89	
Symphonic Poems – cpte 109	Phibbs	On the River (Auf dem Strom), D943 87	Turnage	
Über allen Gipfeln ist Ruh’, S306 85	String Quartet No 1 59	The Shepherd on the Rock (Der Hirt auf dem Felsen), D965 87	Twisted Blues with Twisted Ballad 59	
Die Zelle in Nonnenwerth, S274 85	Polo Campos	String Quartets – No 9, D173; No 14, ‘Death and the Maiden’, D810 58	V	
Locke	Cuando llora mi guitarra 87	Symphony No 5, D485 37	Velázquez	
Canon ‘4 in 2’ on a Plain Song 55	Porpora	Swansong (Schwanengesang), D957 87	Bésame mucho 87	
Canon ‘4 in 2’ on the Hexachord 55	Fugue in G minor 48	Trauerwalzer, D365 No 2 70	Verdi	
Consort of Four Parts – Six Suites 55	Portillo de la Luz	Valses sentimentales, D779 (excs) 70	Un ballo in maschera – Alzati! ... Eri tu 101	
The Flat Consort 55	Contigo en la distancia 87			
Lotti	Poulenc			
Crucifixus 48	Organ Concerto 44			
Lutoslawski	Piano Concerto 44			
Funeral Music 61	Stabat mater 44			

Cornelia Funke

The German children's author on the relationship between music and her writing

I was often enchanted by the human voice, whether it's reading aloud or singing. But when I started writing seriously, very soon the only music I could listen to while writing was Bach's *The Well-Tempered Clavier* – a different kind of music, almost like a massage of the brain while you're writing. Then later on, the more and more I fell in love with classical music, I really chose to listen to music related to the book I was writing – what period of time is it set in, what atmosphere do I want to evoke? When I wrote the Inkheart series, which is set in a fictional Middle Age, I listened to troubadour music, and – though he is too late – to Henry Purcell. When I was writing the Reckless series, set in the 19th century, I mainly listened to music of that era, because as we know, music is the most perfect time machine.

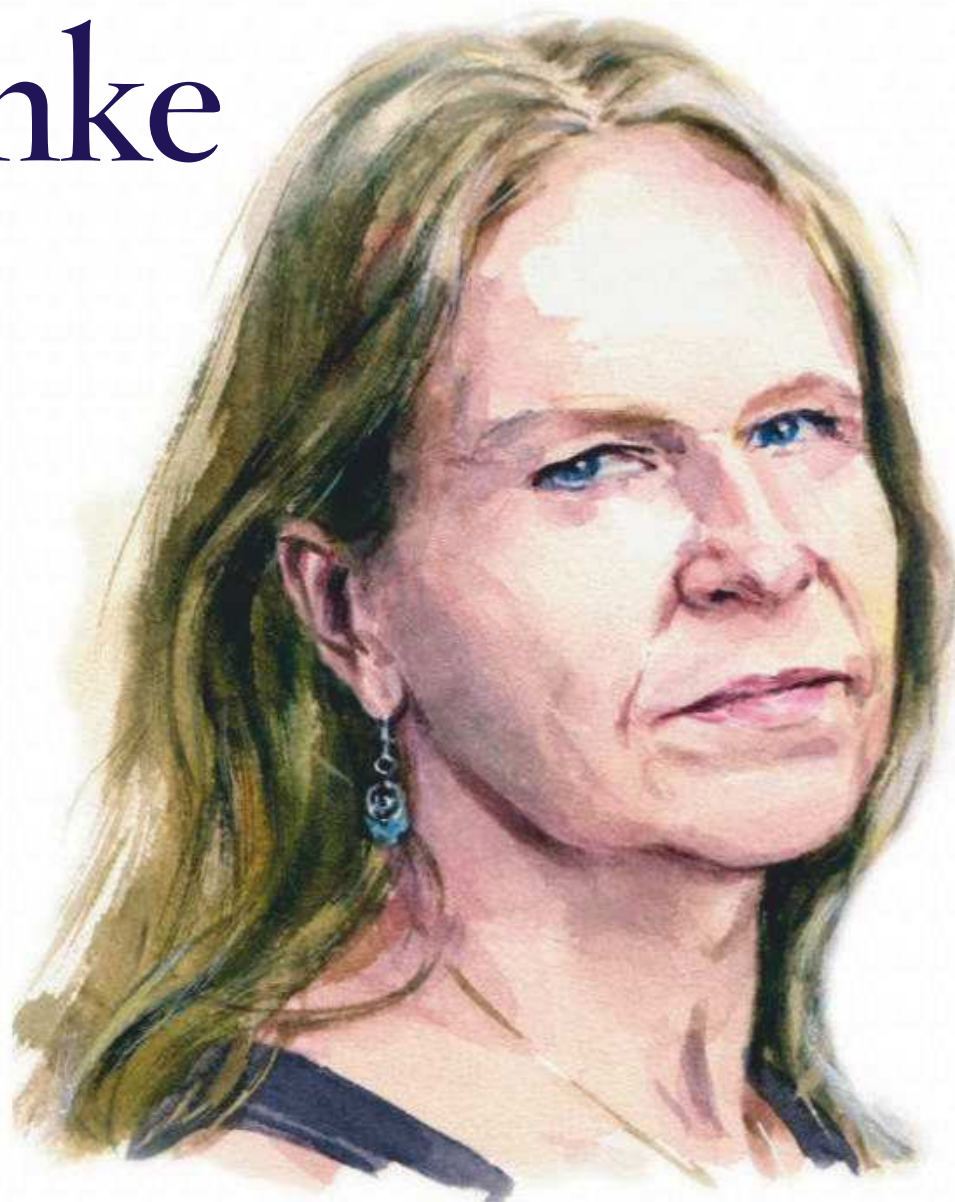
With Bach I mostly listened to Glenn Gould, who is humming and singing while playing, so there was always a very human presence while I was listening. Whereas for Purcell I always love to listen to his operas, to *The Fairy Queen*, and *King Arthur*, and especially *Dido and Aeneas*, and funnily I could always cope with the singing. I wonder how much of Purcell slowly seeped into the writing as I was so, so enchanted by his music.

When writing, it's very hard for me to listen to modern music – I can do that when illustrating – but often the emotional impact is of a different nature and distracts me too much from what I'm doing. Whereas, interestingly, even the most intense classical music somehow always feels to me that it melts into what I'm doing and doesn't contradict it or fight it for my attention.

I like to let my readers know now what I am listening to, and have given a few interviews about it. Teenagers and children ask 'Do you listen to music?', and so I give them these names they've never heard before. It's a wonderful thing when you work with young adults as much as I do to give them that inspiration, and say 'I know this may sound strange and unfamiliar', but because it's connected with me, they give it a try.

I have an old avocado farm in Malibu which I'm currently building into a place where young artists can come and have a little residency – illustrators, writers and musicians. I just had a workshop there run by the cellist Matt Haimowitz with four young cellists aged between 19 and 26 from the East Coast and Canada. And it was the first time that young musicians stayed. I could hear the cellos from all sides of the property, and then they even gave a little concert for friends of mine.

My friendship with Matt Haimowitz came about through a child – in my experience the most important things happen that way. The son of Lisa Delan, a wonderful American




THE RECORD I COULDN'T LIVE WITHOUT

'Care-charming Sleep'

The Dowland Project / John Potter ECM

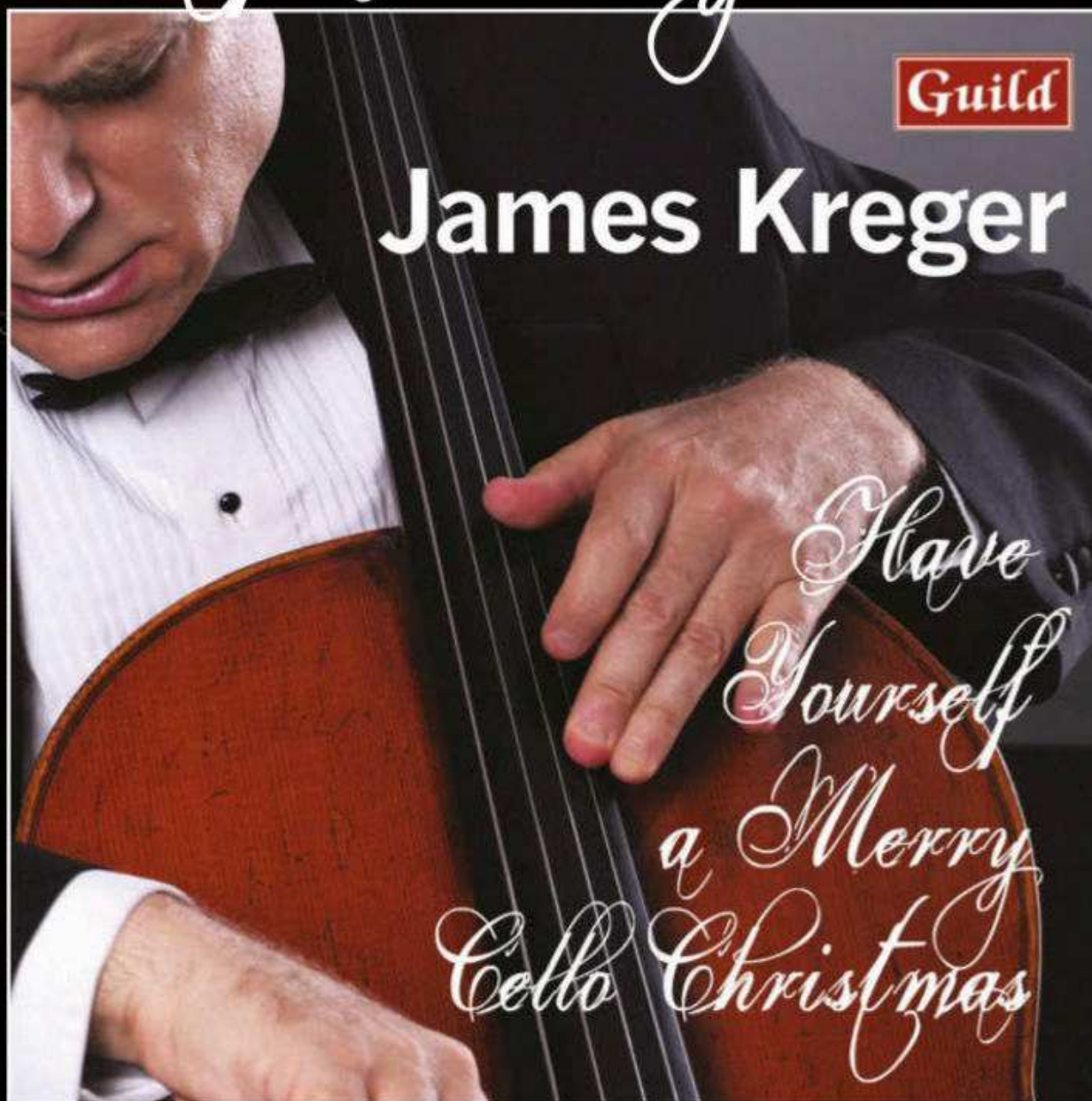
It's such a beautiful bringing together of aspects of music – it so naturally and easily melts music of very different ages together.

soprano who works with Matt and his wife Luna a lot, suggested, when they were thinking about a lullaby project for children, to introduce them to classical music through a story: 'Why don't you ask Cornelia Funke to write the story as I love her books?' It sounded like a wonderful project so I asked what music they had in mind. When they sent me the selection I first of all said 'This is impossible, this is a selection about life and death and heartbreak – that's not exactly what I would write for four-year-old children!' But then I locked myself into my writing house for a weekend and said 'OK, this is an impossible task but, as with all impossible tasks, you have to try'. And the story – which became *Angel Heart* – came so easily, so playfully that I almost did not have to work.

I've been working with Matt on a new project. He broke his cello more than a year ago. He had an accident when he was giving a lesson on a Poulenc piece, he stumbled and fell, and the cello's neck broke. He was of course absolutely traumatised, the cello was a part of him since he was a boy. So he called me and said this strange thing happened – and there is a story in this. So we started working on it half a year ago, just meeting from time to time. I want this piece to be about the connection that creativity forms between an instrument and a human being – the connection we make with music.  *Angel Heart, a music storybook is available now on Oxingale*

James Kreger

Have Yourself a Merry Cello Christmas



Internationally acclaimed cellist, James Kreger, has created a Christmas album with a difference. In his own words: *"The more I thought about it, the more I realized that the thrill of engaging the most profound and challenging cello masterpieces does not inhibit my deep affection for these Christmas melodies or my desire to 'sing' them, as so many people around the world love to do. My aim is to present them from my own perspective, in fashions that maximize their beauty and bring out their unexpected qualities."*

The result is an album of Christmas music skilfully arranged with the cello taking the vocal line.

Includes: Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas ~ O Holy Night! ~ Away in a Manger ~ We Three Kings/What Child Is This? ~ Go Tell It on the Mountain ~ It Came Upon a Midnight Clear ~ I Don't Know How to Love Him ~ First Noel ~ Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire ~ God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen ~ Angels We Have Heard on High ~ Little Drummer Boy ~ Silent Night

James Kreger, cello; with, amongst others, Bill Mays, piano; Andrew Sterman, flute, clarinet; Sean Harkness, acoustic guitar; Melanie Feld, oboe and English horn; Lynette Wardle, harp; William Galison, harmonica; Patrick Milando, French horn and Bill Hayes, percussion.

GMCD 7812

"This is a lovely collection of heartwarming, superb arrangements that is also a beautiful and unexpected way to channel the talent of James Kreger." Fanfare Magazine

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